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# Niles Concept Plan



Development and Environmental Services Department  
Planning Division  
39550 Liberty Street  
P.O. Box 5006  
Fremont, CA 94537-5006

FEHR & PEERS ASSOCIATES, INC.  
MOORE IACOFANO GOLTSMAN, INC.  
STRATEGIC ECONOMICS

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### **City Council**

Gus Morrison, Mayor  
Bob Wasserman, Vice Mayor  
Judy Zlatnik  
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### **Planning Commission**

Elin Thomas, Chairperson  
Laurie Manuel, Vice Chairperson  
Betty Arneson  
Mark Cohen,  
Pauline Weaver  
Bob Wieckowski  
Bill Harrison

### **Historic Architectural Review Board**

Joesph Au, Chairperson  
Bob Tavares, Vice Chair  
Rick Marlais  
Al Minard  
Jill Singleton

### **City Staff**

Claudia Albano, Community Engagement  
Jennifer Anderson, Redevelopment Project Manager  
Dan Marks, City Planner  
Jeff Schwob, Project Manager  
Craig Whittom, Redevelopment Director

### **Special Thanks to...**

The Community of Niles  
Niles Main Street Association  
Niles Merchants Association  
Niles Project Area Committee  
Niles Property Owners Association

### *Prepared by:*

### **Moore Iacofano Goltsman, Inc.**

Daniel S. Iacofano, Principal-in-Charge  
D. Paul Tuttle, Director of Urban Design  
Kenneth Ho, Associate  
Junko Peterson, Associate

### **Fehr & Peers Associates**

Jim Daisa, Principal  
Jaime Schmidt

### **Strategic Economics**

Dena Belzer  
Gerald Autler

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## Executive Summary

Niles is a historic railroad junction point located at the mouth of Niles Canyon and off the main highway. The vision for Niles is to revitalize it as an attractive and lively destination for visitors and residents alike, to strengthen its pedestrian scale, its small town character and its local economy. The vision also holds that railroad passengers will stop again in Niles.

Niles is located in the northeast corner of the City of Fremont. It is bordered by foothills and railroad tracks to the north and east, and the Alameda Creek (a County Flood Control Channel) and the Quarry Lakes to the south and west (see figure 1). The street grid system of Niles is generally oriented in an east-west direction with the Fremont foothills to the north. Two major roadways, Niles and Mission Boulevards, train tracks and the Alameda Creek tend to isolate the Niles community from the rest of Fremont. Despite its location in the highly populated San Francisco Bay Area, Niles has retained over the years a small-town, historic character.

The vision for the Community Commercial area is to retain the eclectic character and diversity of the Niles District, encourage revitalization with both the rehabilitation of existing buildings and the construction of new buildings, appropriately scaled and designed for the Niles context.

To achieve the vision, the Concept Plan proposes to build upon the strong sense of place; to reinforce

entryways to the downtown, to retain the strong connections to the hills and creek, to encourage restaurants, outdoor dining and a central plaza, and to promote public spaces and parking areas that are safe, clean and easily accessible.

## Historical Overview

**Vallejo Mills.** The town of Niles is located on the north side of Alameda Creek, the historic boundary between the 17,000-acre Rancho Arroyo de la Alameda and the ex-Mission San Jose lands. The rancho was raided by both Fremont and Sutter for horses and food supplies during the Mexican-American War. Don Jose Vallejo's flourmills at the mouth of Niles Canyon were active from 1842 to 1884, during which time the mill townsite was widely known as Vallejo Mills and was the area's social center.

**Agriculture.** Jonas Clark held the rancho from 1865 to 1884, when it was divided and sold to become Dry Creek Ranch, the California Nursery and the railroad town of Niles. Prior to the sale the lands were leased for cattle ranching and mixed farming. Vegetable growing by Portuguese and Italians for the San Francisco market commenced in the 1870's near Niles, taking advantage of the new rail service and starting a gardening tradition that continues today. The floodplains south of Niles supported record wheat yields in the first years of American settlement

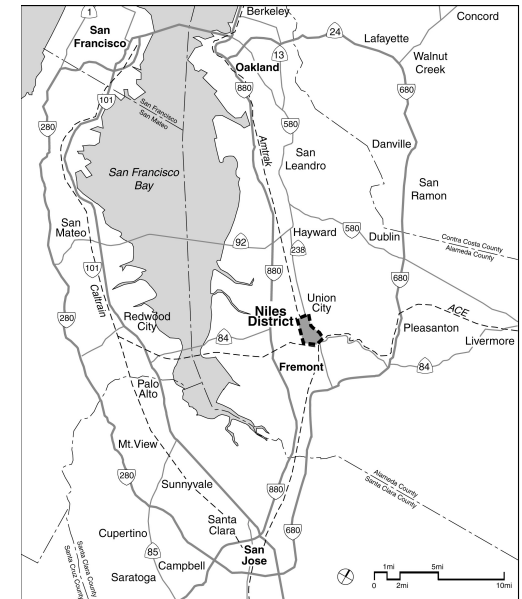


Figure 1: Location Map



View of Niles

and were the first location for orchards, nurseries and field crops in Alameda County.

***Orchards.*** The Niles area has an extraordinary heritage as a result of its historic nurseries. The Shinn orchards (1871), famous for its new fruit varieties, bounded the west side of what is now the Niles Historic Overlay District. Acquired by a San Francisco firm in 1888, it opened a packing yard at the Niles Depot, making Niles their distribution station. In 1907, it was being operated by the Ellsworth family.

***California Nursery Company.*** The California Nursery was established in 1865 in Santa Clara but relocated in 1884 to the mile-square parcel east of the newly platted town of Niles. Advantages included excellent soil, artesian wells and its own rail-loading facility at what is now Nursery Avenue. By the early 20th century it was the largest nursery on the West Coast, famous for its citrus, olives, roses and exotic introductions. The Roeding family, owners of a major nursery operation in Fresno acquired it in 1917. In the 1930's they restored the Vallejo Adobe for visitors to the nursery and its famous spring flower event; in 1939 they supplied all the planting stock for the World's Fair at Treasure Island.

***Transcontinental Railroad.*** The railroad era began in 1866 when Central Pacific built a line connecting Oakland and San Jose. In 1868 McLoughlin built the Niles Canyon to Altamont Pass section of railroad. This alignment was acquired in 1869 by the Central Pacific Railroad as the last section of the first trans-continental railroad. Until a railroad ferry crossing was installed across the Sacramento River in the

1870's this was the only railroad link to the east. The station was named "Niles" after Judge Addison C. Niles, one of the railroad's pioneer officials. A railroad town was planned at the junction but was not officially platted and named as Niles until 1888. Front Street was built wide enough for turning of wagons delivering to the freight holding and shipping areas. The railyards included an icehouse for the early refrigerator cars shipping fresh fruit, a water tower, a partial roundhouse, train repair shops and at one time had its own jail.

***Railroad Passenger Era.*** In 1904 the Niles Depot was built with greatly expanded waiting rooms, similar to other stations built at the same time by Southern Pacific between Oakland and the Del Monte Hotel at Monterey. Niles became a destination for city daytrippers that came for picnics and dances in Niles Canyon. Passenger trains to Niles had largely ceased by 1941. The Feather River Route on the Western Pacific alignment (1910) maintained a Niles passenger stop on the south side of Alameda Creek into the 1960's.

***Silent Movie Era, 1913 – 1916.*** Niles was the site of the first movie studios west of the Mississippi and also served as a stage set for hundreds of silent western movies. The Essanay Film Manufacturing Co. (founded in 1907 in Chicago) established a film studio in Niles, located at First and G streets. The studio also built eight bungalow cottages at the rear of the property to house the actors and staff. In 1914, Essanay Studios hired Charlie Chaplin, who stayed until 1915 after filming some seven films including the "Little Tramp". During its heyday, the studio was

filming up to one movie every two days. Many of these were the cowboy movies made famous by Bronco Billy Anderson, as well as those with Ben Turpin and other early movie pioneers. The studio went out of business in 1916, and its buildings were demolished in 1939. The studio bungalows were turned around and relocated to Second Street.

***Industry in Niles*** The early gravel pits on the banks of Alameda Creek were linked by a railspur to the railroad junction at Niles and supplied the construction of railbeds through Niles Canyon. In addition to the long-lived California Nursery Company and the short-lived Essanay Studios; companies such as the Farwell Stone Quarry (1879), Ellsworth Packing Company, Ellsworth Planing Mill, Schuckl cannery (1923), Kimber Poultry (1925), Pacific Mushroom Company, Ames Mfg. Co./Victory Ironworks, California Brick Company, Kraftile (1926), Pine Nursery, California Pottery (1930), Pacific States Steel (1937), Laclede-Christy refractories (1948), Inland Aggregate (1948) and Kaiser Gravel (1949) were operating in the immediate Niles railroad corridor, many for over 50 years.

***County Roads and Bridges*** By 1914, the first underpass was built and Niles had a paved Front Street and concrete sidewalks, as well as a courthouse and jail. During the late 1930's Niles was the focus for significant investment in bridges, underpasses and county roadways, as part of a highway bypass program. As part of that project Niles lost its direct bridge crossing over Alameda Creek at the south end of Niles Boulevard.

## **History Alive Today**

Today, the compact, seven-block long commercial main street that borders Niles Boulevard retains its historic integrity. Stores in historic buildings line the street, many of which sell antiques and other objects from the community's rich local past. The residential neighborhood abutting the commercial area has numerous examples of houses dating from the 1880s Victorian era to the bungalow style homes built in the 1915s to the 1930s.

Today the volunteers of the Pacific Locomotive Association have restored steam engines, passenger cars and other rolling stock and operate regular excursions through Niles Canyon between Sunol and Niles. Especially popular are the spring wildflower runs and the evening Polar Express events. The Altamont Commuter Express now uses the old Feather River Route. The Amtrak Capitol Corridor Service and freight trains share use of a mainline track through downtown Niles on property owned by the Union Pacific Railroad.

The California Nursery and Shinn legacy of large and unusual trees and a long-standing gardening tradition are celebrated with the Niles spring wildflower event and garden tours every May. The Essanay Studios history has a life of its own with Charlie Chaplin Day and the Silent Movie events held every June.



## Strategic Approach

This Concept Plan is a strategic plan of action for the Niles community. It outlines a vision for the future of Niles and the action steps to get there. The plan comes at a time of great opportunity, with a strong economy and high growth in the region, particularly in the nearby Silicon Valley. At a time of such rapid growth, it is particularly important to have a strategy-based, community-driven plan such as this Concept Plan to guide the future development of the area. Careful planning will preserve the character of Niles, enhance the viability of the commercial district, and contribute to a high quality of life for residents.

The strategic approach helps define where the community should be going, and helps to organize community efforts toward achieving the community's objectives for the future. The strategic planning process involves the ongoing participation of the community in producing the community's vision for the future. It emphasizes team planning and builds commitment to the vision because participants have ownership in the plan.

The Concept Plan is composed of four major elements: the vision, the strategic framework, the planning concepts and the implementation program.

- **Vision:** The community paints a picture of the desired future condition of the community.
- **Strategic Framework:** The strategic framework organizes the vision into a set of strategies built on an understanding of the economic and physical constraints of the community. A strategy specifies a direction for the community to take, defining the

“what” dimension of planning rather than the “how.” The strategic framework takes the vision one step forward by providing a framework for implementing the vision. The framework is important because it provides an overall picture of how the strategies work together.

- **Concept:** The Niles Concept Plan includes a planning concepts element with policies, concept diagrams, illustrations, and maps that show how the vision would be applied to the Niles district in terms of physical form. The concepts outline general policy directions for future land use, transportation and circulation, open space, and community design. These policies describe the future physical organization of the community and are also intended as a guide for updating the City's General Plan and Zoning Ordinances so that they are consistent with the vision for the Niles District.
- **Implementation Program:** The implementation matrix outlines the key actions in implementing the community's vision and strategy. The matrix is organized around the strategic framework, with a set of specific actions for the implementation of each strategy.



### Land Use

**Existing Land Use** – The Niles commercial district is situated along a railroad corridor at the base of the foothills. Commercial uses in Niles are concentrated along Niles Boulevard from the railroad underpass at Niles Boulevard to F Street. The commercial area includes a variety of retail and service uses interspersed with a few apartments, a hotel and an occasional single-family home. Residents of Niles sometimes refer to it as a “one-sided railroad town” due to the lack of development on the north (hill) side of Niles Boulevard from approximately H Street to J Street on land historically owned by the railroad. A portion of this site is used for parking. The Niles Merchants’ Association maintains an old train car (currently utilized for their meetings) located on the edge of the easternmost parking lot.

Commercial uses front on both sides of Niles Boulevard between F Street and H Street and a small portion easterly of J Street. In addition, the lettered side streets between Niles Boulevard and Second Street also contain a variety of businesses and service uses including the Niles Library and Post Office. Some light industrial uses exist on the north side of Niles Boulevard from E Street to F Street and a chemical factory is located at the southeastern end of the commercial district, near Alameda Creek.

The Niles neighborhood is well treed and largely comprised of single-family homes. The Niles Elementary School, Niles Veterans Hall, Niles Community Park, Niles Library and a number of religious facilities serve the neighborhood.

North of the railroad tracks, along Mission Boulevard, there is a mix of uses including primarily residential uses, but also commercial and industrial uses. The hill area that rises beyond the narrow strip of development along Mission Boulevard is restricted for development under the Hillside Initiative approved by Fremont residents in 1981. (See *Figure 3, Existing Conditions*.)

**General Plan and Zoning** – Under the existing Fremont General Plan and Zoning Ordinance, Niles includes a Community-Commercial area (zoned C-C, Community-Commercial) along Niles Boulevard. The area south of the commercial area, and the island between Mission Boulevard and the railroad tracks are designated Low-Density Residential (R-1-6 and R-1-8 zoning). Several parcels on either end of the commercial district on Niles Boulevard and several properties along the northern (hill) side of Mission Boulevard are zoned Light-Industrial (I-L). The Niles Community Park, Niles Depot Historic Park, Vallejo Mills Historical Park and much of the foothills are zoned Open Space. (See Figures 4 and 5 for General Plan and Zoning Maps.)

The City of Fremont applies a Historical Overlay District in order to preserve the character of Fremont’s historic communities. The majority of the core area described above is included within the Niles Historical Overlay District. These areas are subject to special design regulations and review by the City’s Historical Architecture Review Board (HARB).



*Commercial uses along Niles Boulevard*



*Niles Elementary School*

### **Economics**

There are currently 75 retail establishments in Niles, including some businesses that share commercial space. Most retail businesses in Niles are oriented towards a larger market area than the local community. Those “regional-serving” businesses include antiques and collectibles, art galleries, home furnishings/design, jewelers, specialty stores, bars and restaurants, and museums. Local-serving uses include grocery and convenience stores, hair salons, automotive businesses, insurance, and other services.

The core retail vacancy rate is estimated to be less than 5 percent and space is generally near full occupancy. Retail rents (1999-2000) range from \$0.60 to \$1.25 per square foot, with newer leases averaging in the \$1.00 per square foot range. Commercial rents in Niles are somewhat lower than elsewhere in Fremont where rents in newer shopping centers range from \$1.35 to \$1.65 per square foot. Vacancies along Niles Boulevard are leased quickly to new retail users, and there is increasing interest in Niles for small (less than 1,000 square feet) office users as well.

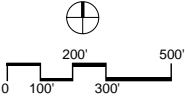
There is currently no major full-service supermarket within two miles of Niles in either direction along Niles or Mission Boulevards. Two convenience markets and a local market on Niles Boulevard, opposite the Sullivan Underpass currently serve the area.

There are six grocery stores within a three-mile radius of Niles, generally considered to be the far edge of a grocery store's trade area. Niles may have sufficient buying power to support a neighborhood-serving grocery store. While there is considerable competitive pressure from the already established supermarkets in the trade area, the Mission Boulevard area (Ford Tract) may provide a location for destination oriented retail uses that would not readily locate in the downtown area.



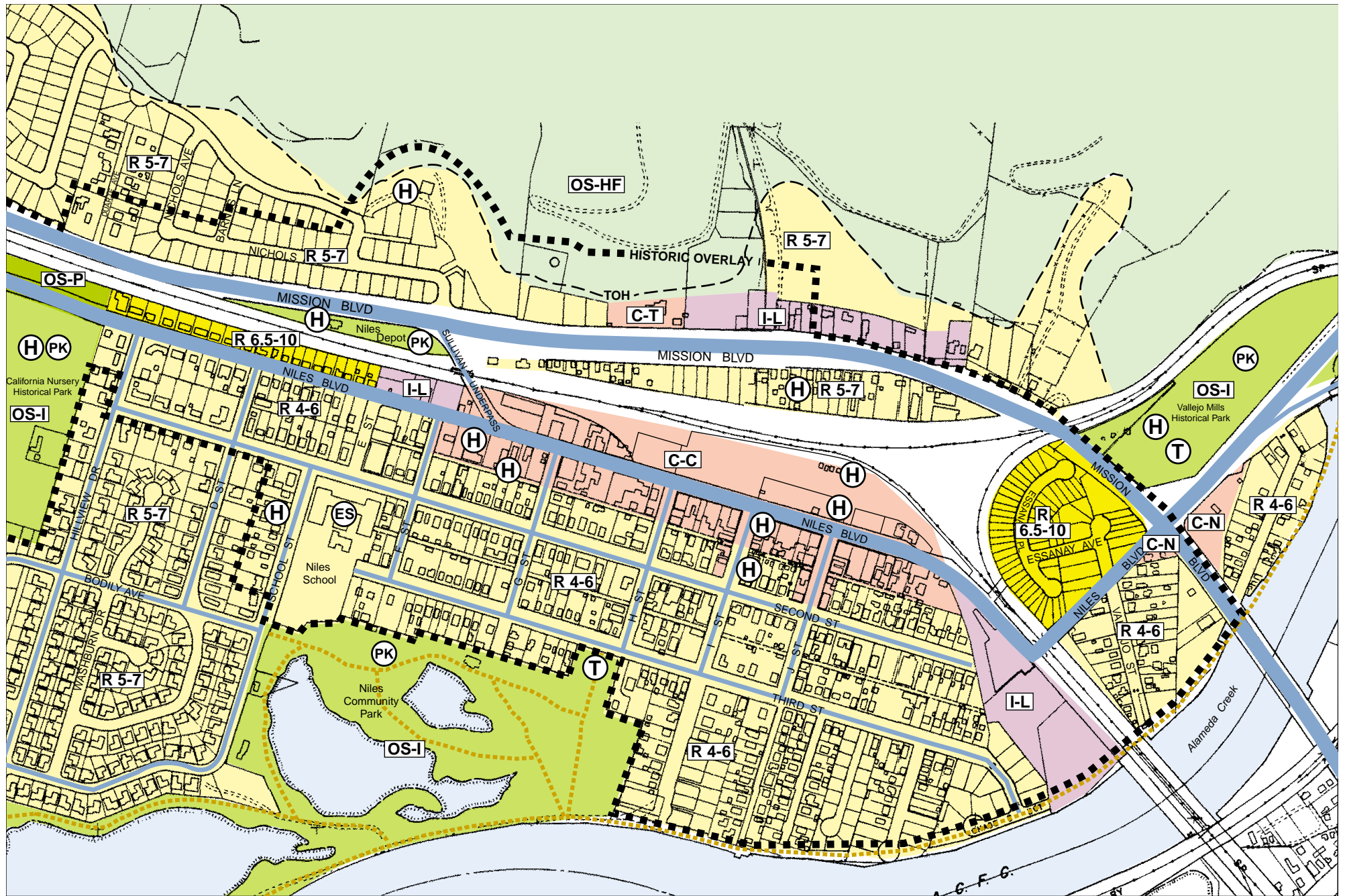
**MIG, Inc**  
 800 Hearst Avenue  
 Berkeley, CA 94710  
 510.845.7549

- |                           |                  |                        |                |
|---------------------------|------------------|------------------------|----------------|
| Single-Family Residential | Mixed-Use        | Civic/Quasi-Public Use | Public Parking |
| Multi-Family Residential  | Office           | Open Space             | Vacant Lot     |
| Commercial                | Industrial-Light | Agricultural           |                |



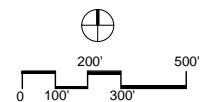
**Figure 3**  
**EXISTING LAND USE**  
**NILES CONCEPT PLAN**  
 CITY OF FREMONT  
 PLANNING DIVISION





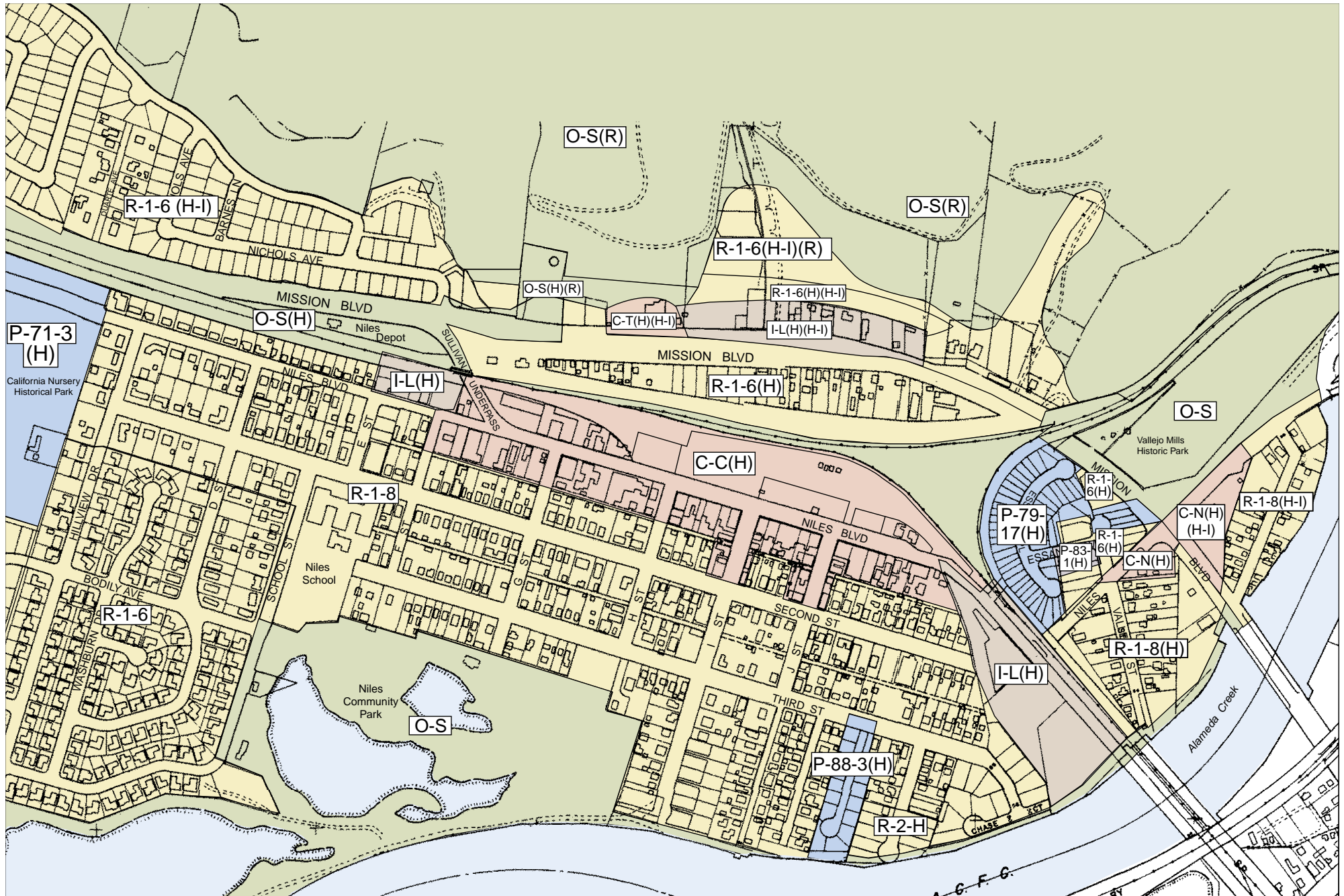
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800 Hearst Avenue  
Berkeley, CA 94710  
510.845.7549

- |                                    |                                      |                              |                            |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>R</b> Residential-Low           | <b>I-L</b> Industrial-Light          | <b>ES</b> Elementary School  | <b>PK</b> Park / Play Area |
| <b>R</b> Residential-Med           | <b>OS-HF</b> Hill Face Open Space    | <b>T</b> Trailhead           | --- Toe of Hill            |
| <b>C-C</b> Commercial-Community    | <b>OS-P</b> Private Open Space       | --- Foot and Bike Trail      | --- Arterial               |
| <b>C-N</b> Commercial-Neighborhood | <b>OS-I</b> Institutional Open Space | <b>H</b> Historical Resource | --- Collector Street       |
| <b>C-T</b> Commercial-Thoroughfare |                                      | ■ ■ ■ Historic Overlay       |                            |



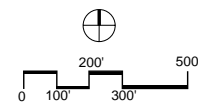
**Figure 4**  
**EXISTING GENERAL PLAN**

**NILES CONCEPT PLAN**  
CITY OF FREMONT  
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<b>R-1</b>	Single-Family Residential District (last number refs. to min. lot size)	<b>I-L</b>	Light-Industrial District	<b>(H-I)</b>	Hillside Combining District
<b>C-N</b>	Neighborhood Commercial	<b>P</b>	Planned District	<b>(H)</b>	Historical Overlay District
<b>C-C</b>	Community-Commercial District	<b>O-S</b>	Open Space District	<b>(R)</b>	Development Reserve Overlay District
<b>C-T</b>	Thoroughfare Commercial				



**Figure 5**  
**EXISTING ZONING**  
**NILES CONCEPT PLAN**  
 CITY OF FREMONT  
 PLANNING DIVISION



## Transportation and Circulation

The Niles district is located near major transportation corridors, including I-880, I-680, State Highways 84 (Niles Canyon) and 238 (Mission Boulevard). Downtown Niles is, however, somewhat isolated from the major freeways located approximately five miles down Alvarado-Niles Boulevard from I-880, and four-miles down Mission Boulevard from I-680. Niles is immediately adjacent to the intersection of State Highways 238 and 84. From Mission Boulevard, Niles is accessible primarily via two underpasses that underlie the railroad tracks between Niles and Mission Boulevards.

### *Traffic and Circulation*

The central Niles District is comprised of a traditional grid system. The main arterial, Niles Boulevard, is the primary street into and out of the district. Niles Boulevard carries about 9,000 cars a day between Sullivan Underpass and Mission Boulevard.

Niles Boulevard has no traffic control devices (e.g., stop signs, traffic signals, etc.). The closest traffic signals are located at Nursery Avenue and Mission Boulevard. This makes it difficult for both vehicular and pedestrian traffic to cross Niles Boulevard when heavy traffic is flowing freely such as during the morning peak period when commuters often use Niles Boulevard to bypass congestion along Mission Boulevard.

The neighborhood streets carry low volumes consistent with their function. Due to the relatively low traffic volumes, stop signs are used rather than

signals to control traffic. When traffic on Mission Boulevard intensifies it spills over onto Niles Boulevard and the neighborhood street grid as commuters look for alternatives to avoid congestion.

### *Transit Service*

Alameda County Transit Bus Route 213 provides bus service to downtown Niles. It travels from the Fremont BART station through Niles to locations in north Fremont. Currently, service is provided Monday through Friday, every half-hour, from 6:30 a.m. to 6:25 p.m. Weekend service operates from 7:15 a.m. to 7:15 p.m. hourly.

Niles residents have a short drive (about 2.5 miles) to both the downtown Fremont and Union City BART stations. The Fremont-Daly City and the Fremont-Richmond BART lines serve these BART stations. Amtrak stations are about 3.25 miles from Niles.

### *Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities*

Sidewalk and streetscape improvements have recently been completed along Niles Boulevard in the business district, including street furniture, landscaping and lighting to narrow the appearance of Niles Boulevard and make the commercial district more pedestrian friendly.

Off-street bicycle trails in the Niles vicinity include the Alameda Creek trail, which begins at Vallejo Mills Historic Park and extends to Coyote Hills Regional Park. While there are also on-street designated bicycle lanes, connections from Niles to other portions of Fremont are somewhat limited by the need to travel



*Residents enjoy the trail along Alameda Creek*

on high-speed, high-volume streets for brief distances, given the restricted opportunities to cross Alameda Creek.

#### *Mission Boulevard*

Mission Boulevard (State Highway 238) is a primary arterial serving Niles. It carries substantial commuter traffic, approximately 36,000 cars a day. Mission Boulevard operates at a poor level of service (LOS) during the morning and evening peak hours (7-8 a.m. and 4-5 p.m.) with extended delays.

A project to widen Mission Boulevard from four to six lanes is currently underway. The initial phase of this project includes widening the Mission Boulevard-Niles Boulevard/Canyon intersection to include an additional left turn lane traveling in the southern direction from Mission Boulevard to Niles Canyon Road and widening of the Alameda Creek bridge to include six travel lanes, a pedestrian walkway and bicycle lanes. The railroad overpass on Mission Boulevard will be rebuilt to accommodate the additional travel lanes.

#### *Parking*

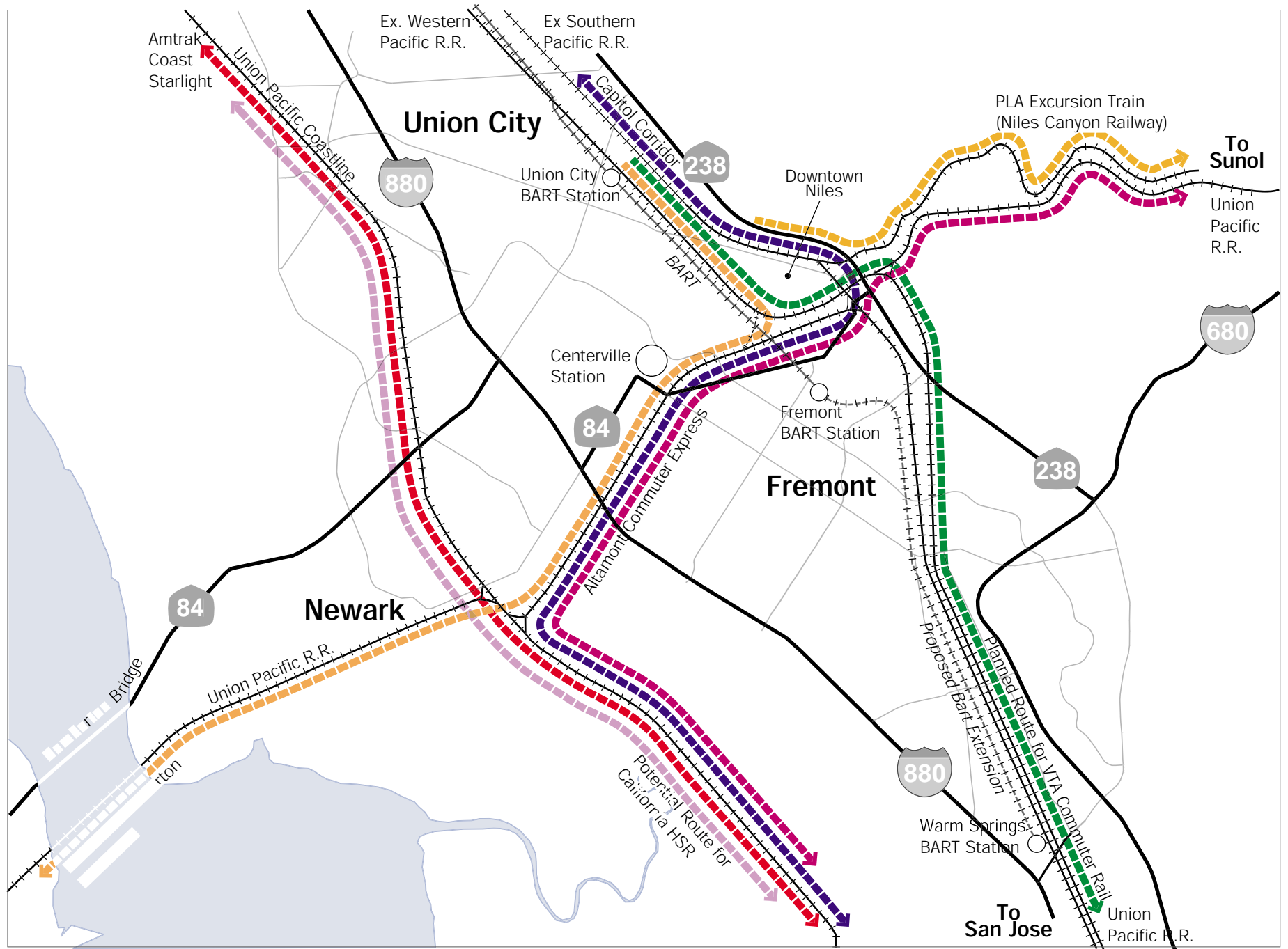
In addition to on-street parking, there are off-street parking facilities within the Niles commercial area. Two public parking lots are located along the north side of Niles Boulevard. One lot, located at J Street, has 110 spaces, while the other, located between G Street and H Street, has 66 spaces. Currently, the unpaved lot near the railroad tracks on the northeast side of Niles Boulevard provides additional capacity during special events.

## **Rail**

Niles is an historic railroad town, with a rail system dating back to Abraham Lincoln's Transcontinental Railway Grant Act from 1865. At present, a historic train and the Amtrak Capitol Corridor passenger line pass through the area but do not let off passengers in Niles. Figure 6 shows existing and potential rail services. Although there is currently no passenger rail service to Niles, there has been much discussion in the community regarding establishing such service for connections to historic rail, or passenger service. The following description of existing and proposed rail service in the vicinity of Niles provides the context for that discussion.

### **Existing Regional Rail Lines**

Most of the rail lines in the Bay Area are currently owned by the Union Pacific (UP) Railroad, consolidating under one ownership rail lines previously owned by the Southern Pacific and Western Pacific Railroads. The following describes the different railroads in the Niles vicinity, referring to them according to their historic names. (*Figure 6 graphically displays these routes*).



**Figure 6**

**REGIONAL RAIL**

**NILES CONCEPT PLAN**  
CITY OF FREMONT  
PLANNING DIVISION



*Former S.P. Centerville/Alviso Line*

The Alviso line starts at Niles junction, and continues southwest to Centerville, and then Newark where the line joins up with the UP Coast Line from Oakland to Santa Clara, west of I-880. There are two existing stations on the Alviso line, in Centerville and at Great America. Three passenger rail services run on the Alviso Line: Amtrak Capitol Corridor, Amtrak Coast Starlight, and the Altamont Commuter Express (ACE). The Capitol Corridor and the ACE line carry commuters, while the Starlight is oriented towards longer trips.

*Former S.P. Hayward/Warm Springs Line*

The former Southern Pacific (SP) line comes south from Oakland and travels just east of the Union City BART station (about 800 feet) and then through the heart of Niles. The line continues through Niles Tower and then travels south just west of Mission Boulevard with at-grade crossings of Stevenson Boulevard and Walnut Avenue. After traversing the east side of Fremont's Central Park, it crosses Paseo Padre Parkway and Washington Boulevard before proceeding to Milpitas and San Jose where it meets the Caltrain line immediately north of the Diridon Station. The line is mainly single track and carries freight traffic. As noted above, north of Niles Tower, it carries the Capitol Corridor.

*WP Line*

The former Western Pacific Line also comes south from Oakland paralleling the BART tracks, and comes immediately east of the Union City BART station. The line travels just southwest of the Niles community before it turns sharply to the southeast along Alameda Creek through Niles Junction and

then again south west on the east side of Mission Boulevard before returning to a location parallel to and east of the SP line. This line too goes south through Milpitas, around downtown San Jose, and intersects the Caltrain line south of Tamien. Trains on each rail line cannot cross to the other. The line is mostly single tracked and carries freight traffic.

**Passenger Rail Services**

There are a number of passenger rail services that pass through or nearby the Niles District.

*Amtrak Capitol Corridor*

Amtrak Capitol Corridor service travels along the ex-SP line south from Sacramento. It travels through Niles and Niles Junction, then travels west along the Alviso line stopping at Centerville. The Capitol Corridor then travels south on the UP Coast line to San Jose.

*Altamont Commuter Express (ACE)*

Originating in Stockton and passing through the Livermore Valley, the ACE train travels through Niles Canyon from Sunol on the Union Pacific line. It continues southwest along the Alviso line and then south to San Jose on the UP Coast line using the same route as the Amtrak Capitol Corridor service.

*Amtrak Coast Starlight*

The Coast Starlight carries passengers, but does not currently offer commuter service. The train travels from northern to southern California on the UP Coast Line.



*Niles has a long railroad history*

*Niles Canyon Railway Excursion Train*

Alameda County owns the right-of-way on the north side of Niles Canyon on which the historic Niles Canyon Railway operates. The Pacific Locomotive Association (PLA) operates historic trains along this scenic route on Sundays from Sunol to Niles. The Union Pacific line lies between the Niles Canyon rail line and the town of Niles. At the present time, the public cannot legally cross the active U.P. line to access Niles Canyon Railway from Niles nor can passengers depart trains to access Niles businesses. Currently, the Sunol Depot is the only station serving this railway.

**Proposed Rail Services**

A number of new rail services are being considered for the future that could affect Niles planning.

*Pacific Locomotive Association*

A Niles Canyon Task Force has been working on a long-term plan for Niles Canyon. The Task Force includes representatives from Alameda County, the Pacific Locomotive Association, East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD), Caltrans, San Francisco and Alameda County Water Districts, the City of Fremont, Union City, Pleasanton and others. Among the many issues the Task Force is considering is the role of the historic rail line in Niles Canyon.

There is broad support for establishing a passenger stop for the Niles Canyon Railway in Niles. As noted previously, passengers cannot cross the active Union Pacific line without benefit of a safe crossing. To address this issue, an application must be made and the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) must grant

permission for an at-grade pedestrian crossing. Alternatively, a grade-separated crossing could be constructed.

The proposed PLA Master Plan calls for obtaining the PUC permit for a pedestrian crossing of the active former Southern Pacific Line. The long term PLA master plan also calls for a cross-platform between the PLA and passenger trains running along the former SP Line (currently, the Capitol Corridor). This could allow future passenger transfer between trains.

Should the at-grade pedestrian crossing be granted and the PLA is able to allow excursion passenger service to Niles from Sunol, additional parking will be needed for this service. After implementation of proposed improvements, the PLA estimates ridership to increase to 2,000 riders per day. An estimated 200 to 250 parking spaces may be needed to meet this expected demand.

*Dumbarton Rail*

There have been recent proposals for reviving an old rail line that traverses the San Francisco Bay just south of the Dumbarton Bridge and using it for passenger rail service to Silicon Valley. One possible route for the Dumbarton Rail would be to travel northwest along the Centerville Line and then build a 0.3-mile connection to the old Western Pacific line just south of where the BART tracks cross the Alameda Flood Control Channel. The new track would travel under the BART tracks and join with the old Western Pacific line north to the Union City BART station.

*VTA Commuter Rail*

The Santa Clara Valley Transit Authority (VTA) Commuter Rail has proposed a temporary service until BART is extended to Warm Springs and San Jose. The VTA Rail proposed to run on the former WP line north from San Jose, through Niles Tower and north to the Union City BART Station. At this time, the VTA line is not expected to travel through or directly serve Niles.



*Street fairs attract many visitors to Niles*



*California Nursery Historic Park*

## Assets and Opportunities

Niles has a number of important strengths that it can and should build upon in a plan for its future. Those strengths include the following.

- ***Unique Visual Image and Community***

***Character.*** Similar to many other towns dating to the 1800s, Niles is comprised of a row of historic storefronts on one side of a street facing a railroad on the other. While much of the rail activity that once characterized Niles is gone, much of the historic commercial frontage is still present making Niles unique in the Bay Area in the degree to which its historic rail character has been retained. The diverse architectural styles seen in Niles date from the 1870's and are eclectic and incremental in nature, reflecting the people who lived there.

- ***Diverse Population.*** Niles has a rich history of immigration. Over the past 150 years immigrants of Portuguese, Hispanic, Asian and Eastern Indian cultures have settled in the Niles area, raised families and contributed to the cultural diversity of Niles.

- ***Historic Sites.*** The Niles area is home to a number of historic sites, including the Vallejo Mills Historical Park, California Nursery Historical Park, Vallejo Adobe, the old Belvoir Hotel and the 1901 Niles Depot. Niles was home to one of California's earliest motion picture studios, the Essanay studios, where Charlie Chaplin made his first "little Tramp" films.

- ***Railroad.*** Niles' ties to the railroad industry began in the 1860's when the Central Pacific founded and developed the town. The town is named after Judge Addison C. Niles, one of the pioneer officials of the original Central Pacific Railroad in Niles. The Niles Canyon Railroad between Sunol and Niles operated by the Pacific Locomotive Association continues to carry on the railroad tradition and provides some of the flavor of those bygone days.

- ***Regional Destination.*** Niles has been an established center for the antique trade for many years, with highly successful annual antique fairs.

- ***Main Street.*** Recent improvements to the Niles streetscape and sidewalk have highlighted the pedestrian friendly traditional "main street" character that can be a valuable attraction to new businesses.

- ***Good Value in Silicon Valley.*** As rents skyrocket throughout the Silicon Valley, the Niles area continues to be highly competitive and also provides a very special and historic community environment for high-tech and other firms looking for a less traditional and yet highly accessible location in Silicon Valley.

- ***Mission Boulevard.*** While Niles feels as if it is a little "off the beaten path", it is adjacent to a heavily traveled highway route which provides good access to the remainder of Fremont and the region. The level of traffic along Mission Boulevard may attract

retailers seeking a location to serve these commuters, as well as Niles residents and the nearby residential neighborhoods along Mission Boulevard extending into Union City.

- ***Proximity to Open Space Amenities.*** Niles is literally surrounded by open space and recreational amenities. Within Niles itself is the Niles Community Park and Vallejo Mills Park as well as the Alameda Creek Trail. Nearby are the recreational recourses of Niles Canyon, Quarry Lakes Regional Park, and the open space resources of the Fremont hills.

- ***Development Opportunity Sites.*** There are several sites that provide opportunities to enhance Niles. Within the town itself, the City's redevelopment agency has recently purchased the 5+ acres area formerly owned by Union Pacific on the north side of Niles Boulevard. Another site, located at the southeast corner of Niles Canyon and Mission Boulevard is the former Big Daddy's restaurant site. This site, located directly across from Vallejo Mills Historical Park and near Alameda Creek, is a gateway into the Niles community and the City of Fremont. Any development here should be sensitive to the importance of this gateway location, views to the surrounding open spaces and the historic context.

- ***Special Events.*** The Niles community hosts a number of special events throughout the year that attracts thousands of visitors to the area. Many of these events, such as the Annual Niles Antique Faire and Flea Market and the Hot August Niles Classic Car Show, capitalize on Niles' character.

Other popular community events include the Niles Christmas Tree Lighting, Holiday House Tours, the Wildflower and Art Festival, Garden Tours and Charlie Chaplin/Bronco Billy and Essanay Days Festivals.

## Challenges

While Niles has many strengths, it also has a few challenges to consider in planning its future:

- Improving access to and visibility of the core retail area.
- Assuring a compatible interface between the commercial area and adjacent homes, particularly as it relates to traffic and noise.
- Encouraging re-investment and improvements to buildings to maintain visitor interest and economic vitality.
- Improving the "look and feel" of Niles by working with local bar owners to minimize loitering and improve or minimize the bar clientele's interaction with visitors and residents.
- Providing desired neighborhood services considering the relatively small local population available to support them.
- Developing organizational capacity for the community to support promotions, business recruitment and building/district improvements.

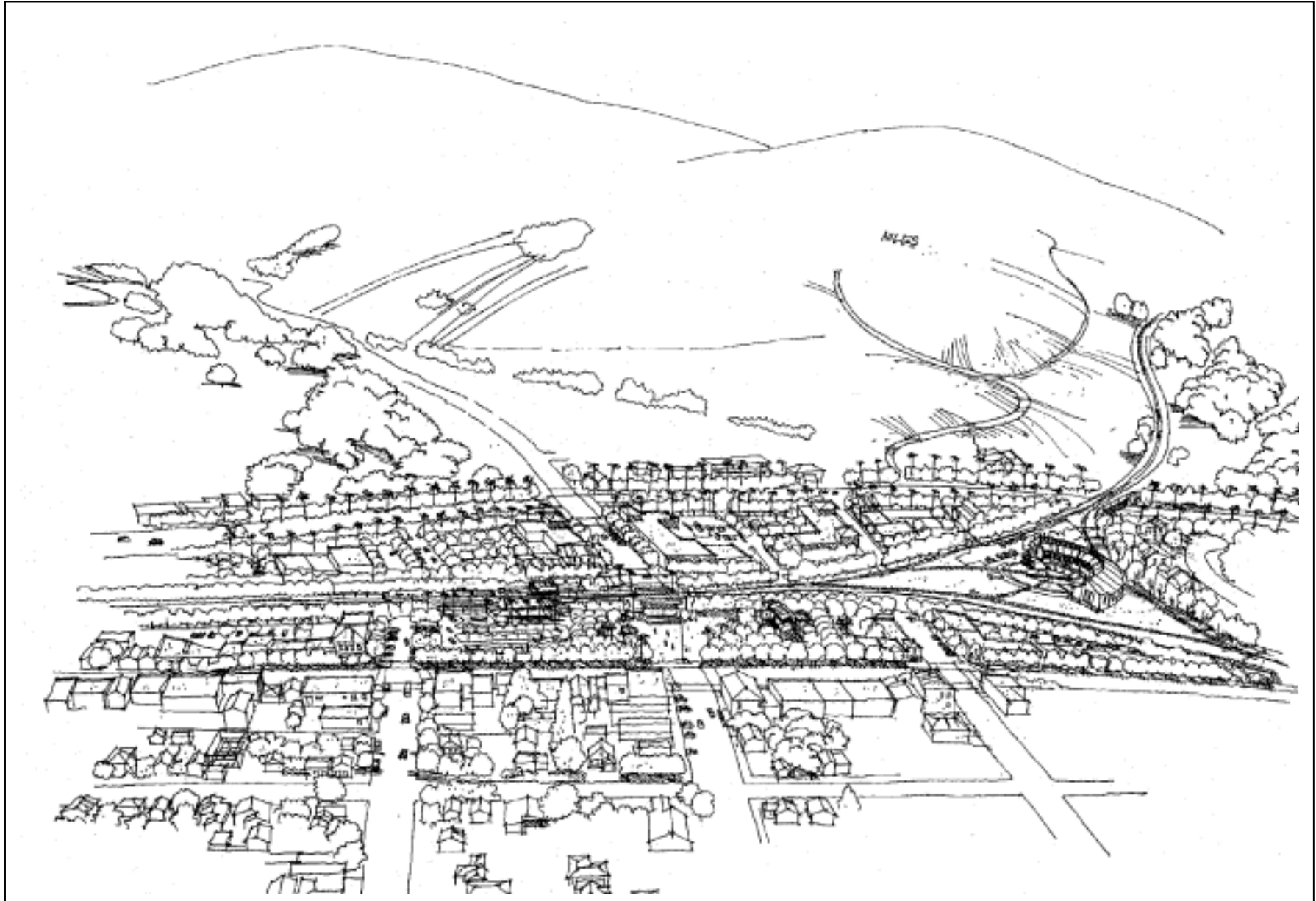


*Quarry Lakes Regional Recreation Area*

There are a number of existing natural and community resources, facilities and programs that make Niles a unique place. It is important to continue to protect these resources while recognizing that new initiatives are needed to maintain a vibrant, well-defined community. The following Vision Concepts express the community's vision for the future of Niles:

- **Create a diverse retail mix** – Attract and retain a diverse and healthy mix of regional and local serving retail businesses to complement existing uses.
- **Incorporate a daytime population** – Increase the presence of office, high tech and live work developments in Niles to support an active retail center as well as the residents of Niles.
- **Create a central gathering place or plaza** – Build a plaza on the land surrounding the historic flagpole for community events, fairs and informal gathering.
- **Establish Niles as a regional destination** – Enhance Niles' cultural and historic venues to create a unique historic entertainment center that will attract people from all over the Bay Area and provide them places to stay.
- **Re-establish a passenger railroad depot downtown** – Create a stop for historic rail service to draw people to the downtown.
- **Improve place-finding ability** – Improve directional and event signage. Enhance gateways/entryways to Niles and develop promotional materials, including maps.
- **Preserve historic Niles** – Preserve and build upon the unique, historic character of Niles' residential and commercial areas, including views from Niles to the hills.
- **Improve the character of Mission Boulevard** – Develop landscaping, office commercial uses, and streetscape improvements along Mission from Sullivan Underpass to Alameda Creek to encourage a connection to downtown Niles.
- **Improve transportation connections** – Improve existing and create new connections to Niles. Those connections may include the historic rail stop, new bus connections, as well as pedestrian and bicycle connections to neighboring open spaces and trails.
- **Enhance alleyways** – Encourage community members and adjacent property owners to work together to improve the accessibility and safety of alleys so that they may complement future commercial and residential development.
- **Ensure Niles is a safe, comfortable place** – Increase the diversity of nighttime businesses and work with community members, police and community support services to maintain Niles as a safe and comfortable place for people.





*Bird's Eye Illustration of Niles Vision*

## Strategic Framework

The Strategic Framework organizes actions and policies suggested by the community to achieve the community vision. The Strategy Framework provides a way to organize goals and specific actions as part of the community vision.

A **strategy** is a set of actions, policies and programs designed to achieve a specific goal. Strategies provide a direction that takes advantage of the unique conditions that exist in a location. Thinking strategically creates not only a shared vision for the future, but also a framework for decision-making and the allocation of limited resources.

The strategic framework proposed for Niles is comprised of eight strategies, lettered A-H. Strategies A-D are considered the *Primary Strategies* while strategies E-H are considered the *Supporting Strategies*. The Implementation Matrix (Chapter 6) summarizes these strategies in a series of proposed actions.

**Primary Strategies** – Primary strategies for Niles include the major new development initiatives based on city and region-wide trends, market data and the unique position afforded to Niles. Primary Strategies are those initiatives that are expected to have the greatest influence to redirect the role of Niles in the City and the region.

**Supporting Strategies** – Supporting strategies are activities and programs that would enhance the overall environment and support the primary strategies. Although these strategies are shown on a second tier, it should be understood that in many cases, they are the projects that are necessary in order to implement the primary strategies.



*Niles was once home to Charlie Chaplin*





*Recent streetscape improvements on Niles Boulevard include wider sidewalks and historic-style lamps*

## **Primary Strategies**

The Strategy Framework for Niles seeks to preserve its unique quiet small town character and strengthen Niles as a regional destination for enjoying entertainment, cultural and historic resources, recreation and shopping.

### **A. Retail Strategy**

The Niles business district should build on its strong character and existing base of businesses while attracting new retail uses that provide both local services as well as those that serve visitors. According to the economic study prepared by Strategic Economics, examples of appropriate new local serving retail uses include a bank, hardware store, bookstore, cafe and a bakery. Larger regional and local serving uses, such as a larger specialty food store, drug store, and gas station could locate off Mission Boulevard. The broader Retail Strategy incorporates a number of components including antiques, high tech and professional offices, entertainment uses, restaurants and craft stores.

### **B. Historic Rail Strategy**

This historic Niles Canyon Railway will bring additional people to the area seeking a unique experience and a traditional “Main Street” atmosphere. Uses that would complement historic railroad service such as a rail museum could also be built near a railroad station. The Pacific Locomotive Association has proposed developing a museum to exhibit its collection of historic railroad artifacts on County property within the railroad wye.

### **C. Historic Preservation Strategy**

The goal of the historic preservation strategy is to preserve and build on the unique qualities of the Niles District. Niles’ historic character is one of its most unique qualities and contributes to an environment that supports related activities. Future development should be consistent in scale, mass and rhythm to that of existing development.

### **D. Community Design Strategy**

A major design feature of the community design strategy for Niles is the creation of a new plaza in the downtown at the intersection of Niles Boulevard and I Street. The new plaza will provide space for community events, performances, and informal gatherings. The train station for the Niles Canyon Railway would also be located at, or adjacent to, the proposed plaza.

In addition to the plaza, the community design strategy includes new landscaping and streetscape improvements along Niles and Mission Boulevards, street tree planting; implementation of the signage programs; and fostering community efforts for alleyway improvements. All of these elements contribute to the character and the comfortable pedestrian atmosphere of Niles.

## **Supporting Strategies**

### **E. Transportation and Circulation Strategy**

The overall intent of the transportation and circulation strategy is to improve access and circulation in and around the Niles district. As new development occurs in Niles and along Mission Boulevard, intersection improvements may become necessary to ensure adequate access to the relatively isolated Niles commercial district. New parking will also be required to serve the growing community. Pedestrian and bicycle connections to nearby parks and open spaces, to Central Fremont and to regional transit enhances the connections between Niles and its surroundings.

### **F. Marketing and Communication Strategy**

The implementation of the Niles Concept Plan hinges on the communication of its vision for the future. The marketing and communication strategy recognizes this importance, and encourages ongoing communication with the community, the City Council, and the development community. The strategy also encourages ongoing marketing of the existing antiques businesses and special events in Niles to the wider region.

### **G. Community Resources Strategy**

The community resources strategy builds on the people-friendly environment of Niles. Access to quality neighborhood schools, improved public safety, and additional services and activities are important elements of a community such as Niles.

### **H. Land Use Regulations Strategy**

The land use concepts, discussed in Chapter 5, provide a description of future land uses in Niles. To enable mixed-use development and other changes in land use, the land use regulations governing the Niles District (e.g., Fremont General Plan and Zoning Ordinance) will require modifications to be consistent with the Niles Concept Plan.

The *planning concepts* form the foundation of the Niles Concept Plan. These concepts are based upon The Vision for Niles (described in Chapter 3) and recommendations from the community. They outline the land use, transportation and circulation, community design, and open space policies for the physical organization of the community. Together, the planning concepts provide a framework for the physical environment of Niles' preferred future.

The planning concepts described in the following pages outline the general direction for Niles in policy statements, maps, concept diagrams and illustrations. These concepts are intended as a guide for updating the City's General Plan and Zoning Ordinances, which will be used to implement the vision for the Niles area.



*Storefronts along Niles Boulevard*

## LAND USE CONCEPT

The land use concept, illustrated in Figure 7, describes the general land use pattern envisioned for Niles.

### **Niles Community Commercial District**

*Policy LU-1: Build upon the existing strengths of the Niles Commercial District and encourage a diverse mix of land uses consistent with the Retail Strategy described in the Concept Plan.*

Businesses that build on and complement existing antique stores are encouraged to locate in the district. Complementary businesses that support the existing Niles retail uses include home furnishing and decorating businesses, hobby/artisan/craft stores, collectable stores, and specialty retail.

Diversification of use within the commercial district is also necessary to ensure a viable economic future for Niles. Mixed-use developments including such uses as restaurants/cafes, bed & breakfast inns, and other local and regional serving businesses are encouraged. Mixed-use developments in Niles should include a mix of retail and other service uses in combination with residential units, live-work units, bed & breakfast inns, and/or office spaces. Generally, ground floor retail with upper floor office and residential units is encouraged.

*Policy LU-2: Promote and maintain a pedestrian-oriented commercial environment along Niles Boulevard and the lettered side streets (to Second Street) within the district.*

A strong pedestrian-oriented “storefront” retail presence is required to maintain the pedestrian character and viability of the Niles commercial district. To support a mixed-use concept within the context of a pedestrian-friendly environment, active uses should be clustered along main pedestrian corridors with buildings built at the property lines at the back edge of sidewalks and with parking lots located either behind retail frontages or below grade. Retail and other active uses on the ground floor with residential units or office spaces on upper floors are required and help maintain a vital, continuous street frontage, increase the perception of safety on the streets, and help to create active pedestrian streets into the evenings.

Development on the Union Pacific property must respect view corridors to the hills and preserve existing sycamore trees along Niles Boulevard. As a result new development will likely take on a slightly different character (buildings may need to be setback or oriented differently) in order to respond to these community assets.

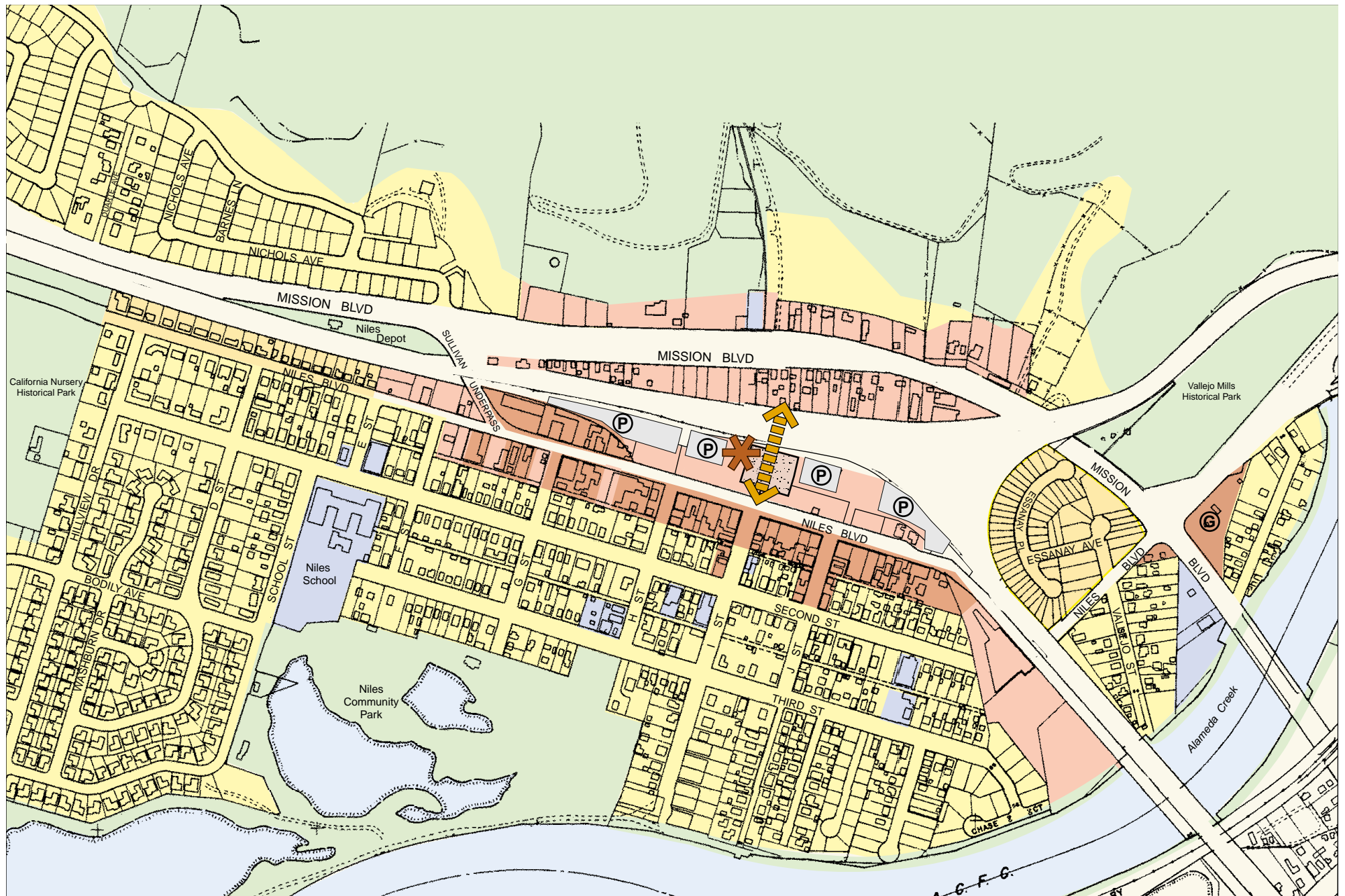
### **Industrial District Conversions**

*Policy LU-3: Redevelop the southeastern end of Niles Boulevard with a mix of commercial and residential live-work uses.*

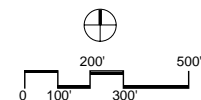
The existing industrial area at the southeastern end of Niles Boulevard (old chemical factory at 37899 Niles Boulevard) should be redeveloped in the long term as a mixed-use residential and commercial area to support the economic revitalization of the commercial district and create an improved pedestrian linkage with Alameda Creek. Artist lofts, live work units and studios are encouraged, particularly where existing structures can be renovated. Light industrial uses, such as furniture making and other crafts could also be located in this area.

*Policy LU-4: Redevelop the western end of Niles Boulevard with medium density residential uses and commercial service uses.*

Should the existing light industrial area along Niles Boulevard next to the Sullivan Underpass (the food locker building at 37000-37048 Niles Boulevard) no longer be viable as a light-industrial use, the property should be redeveloped with medium density residential development or live work studios to support the revitalization of commercial district and to provide an appropriate transition between the commercial district and the residential neighborhood. Commercial service uses could also be included within a mixed-use project, provided that the project allows for an appropriate transition of uses to surrounding residential properties.



- |                            |                   |                              |
|----------------------------|-------------------|------------------------------|
| Residential-Low Density    | Mixed Use         | Parking (Public or Private)  |
| Residential-Medium Density | Open Space        | Pedestrian Railroad Crossing |
| Existing Retail            | Civic/Public Uses | Plaza                        |
| Gateway Commercial         | Industrial-Light  | Niles Depot                  |



**Figure 7**  
**LAND USE CONCEPT**

**NILES CONCEPT PLAN**  
CITY OF FREMONT  
PLANNING DIVISION



## Mission Boulevard

*Policy LU-5: Encourage commercial office uses along Mission Boulevard and specific retail uses that do not compete with retail uses in the downtown area.*

Successful, larger-scale neighborhood and regional-serving commercial uses require a higher level of visibility and heavier traffic volumes than currently exist along Niles Boulevard.

In the long term, larger commercial establishments with local and regional draw, such as specialty grocery stores, could be encouraged along Mission Boulevard. Care must be taken, however to assure that commercial developments along Mission Boulevard do not compete with commercial spaces in the downtown.

The character of development along Mission Boulevard should be consistent with the historic character of the Niles area, with 2-3 story buildings oriented toward a pedestrian-friendly street.

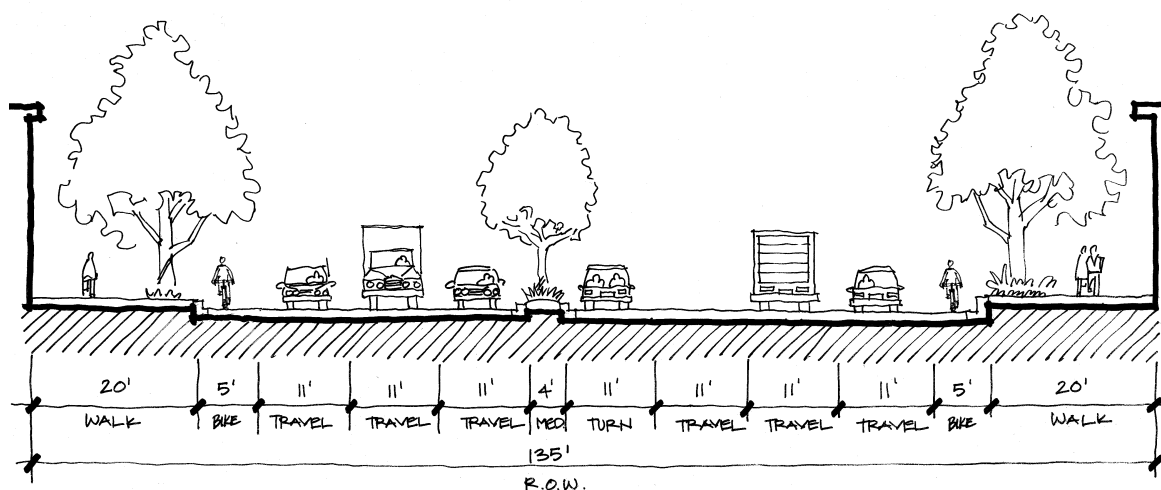
This potential pedestrian friendly street should align with Mayhews Drive at Mission Boulevard, and connect with a future pedestrian link across the train tracks, leading to the downtown plaza and Niles Boulevard. This concept would provide pedestrian access to both a future rail station and the existing Niles commercial district. Office uses above or behind retail/commercial uses may also be an appropriate addition to the pedestrian-friendly street. Older historic homes within this area could be converted to office and service uses and could be re-oriented and relocated, particularly near the eastern

end of the Ford Tract, to serve this new commercial district.

Commercial office use along both sides of Mission Boulevard should be supported to create a daytime workforce that can patronize businesses in Niles.

*Policy LU-6: Develop a master plan for Mission Boulevard prior to allowing incremental conversion from residential to the commercial and office uses described in Policy LU-5. Utilize Planned District zoning to ensure the best quality development. As part of the Planned District process the Niles Design Guidelines shall be amended to incorporate design guidelines for this area.*

The 5.7(±) acre southern side of Mission Boulevard (The Ford Tract) would require parcel assembly of



*Street section of potential Mission Boulevard improvements*

smaller lots that make up the Ford Tract to allow adequate space for development such as described in the previous section. Existing residential uses would continue until local property owners take advantage of increased market demand and opportunities for redevelopment. Local property owners are encouraged to work together with private development interests to consolidate properties for future mixed-use commercial/office development.

### **Niles Gateway/Entryway**

*Policy LU-7: Ensure that development at the corner of Mission Boulevard and Niles Canyon creates a gateway to Fremont and entryway to Niles that complements the Vallejo Mills Historic Park and enhances the entry to Niles Canyon. Planned District zoning should be utilized to achieve the desired results.*

Niles Canyon is recognized in the Fremont General Plan as one of four natural, dramatic gateway entrances to the City of Fremont. Niles Canyon is also designated as a State Scenic Route, requiring that highway design and land uses along the highway consider its scenic nature. (Also See CD-11 – Entryway Landscaping).

The vacant site at the corner of Mission and Niles Canyon (also known as the “Big Daddy’s” site) is a prime gateway opportunity site at the east entrance to Fremont. New development should be of a superior architectural quality that will enhance the scenic qualities of Niles Canyon, compliment the Vallejo Mills Historic Park and provide an attractive gateway/entryway feature for Fremont, the Niles district, and Niles Canyon itself. The site

development should provide improved pedestrian connections across the Boulevard and to Alameda Creek. Driveways and parking should be sited away from the corner of Mission Boulevard and Niles Canyon Road. Additional roadway improvements at the Sycamore Street/Old Canyon Road intersection should also be incorporated into the site development.

Further refinement in allowed and conditionally permitted uses should be considered as part of a Planned District rezoning. The rezoning effort should ensure land use compatibility with surrounding uses and provide flexibility for uses that support nearby recreational opportunities (e.g., a restaurant/café or a small-scale bicycle/sporting goods shop).

### **Residential Neighborhoods**

*Policy LU-8: Retain and protect the single-family character of Niles’ residential neighborhoods.*

The single-family character of the Niles residential neighborhood should be preserved. New homes, in-law units and additions should be allowed, but designed to fit into the overall scale and character of the neighborhood. Implementation of this policy should occur through establishment of a conservation district or overlay zoning.



### Development Intensity (FAR)

*LU-9: Development intensity standards as measured by the Floor Area Ratio (FAR) in the Niles District Community Commercial (C-C) Historic Overlay District should be revised to permit a higher intensity of development.*

The intent of the revised standards is to allow for more generous development intensity as measured by the Floor Area Ratio (FAR) (defined below) for certain properties that are zoned C-C in the Niles Historic Overlay District. A relaxed standard would allow for expansion of older commercial buildings, which cannot now be expanded because their existing FAR may exceed the 0.50 FAR maximum. A more generous standard would also encourage removal of substandard accessory structures and the construction of appropriate new additions.

Floor Area Ratio (FAR) is a measure of the maximum amount of building space allowed on a site in relationship to the lot size. For example, a 0.50 FAR means the floor area of one or more buildings situated on a single parcel cannot exceed one-half the square footage of the parcel size.

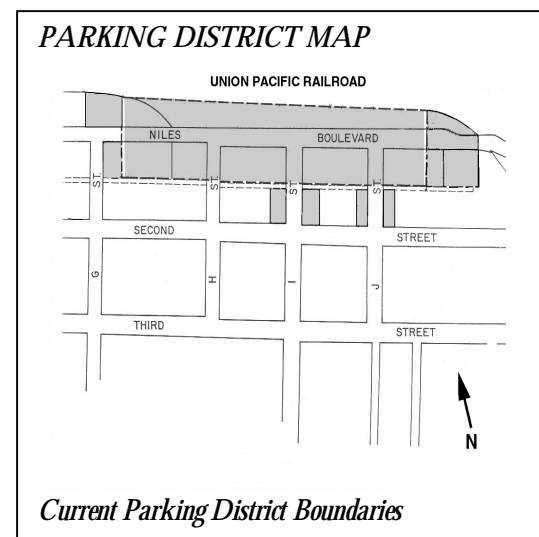
To encourage reinvestment in historic properties it is proposed that existing properties zoned Community Commercial in the Niles Historic Overlay District, which have existing buildings, should be allowed to develop or expand up to a FAR of 1.0. Vacant properties should also be allowed to develop to a FAR of 1.0, except where demolition of a historic building is involved. If a historic building demolition is approved, the new development may not exceed a FAR of 0.50.

The 1.0 FAR allowance would not apply to the Union Pacific or County properties on the north side of Niles Boulevard or other properties that may be added to the Community Commercial District in the future. These properties will continue to be limited to a 0.50 FAR. In all cases, new development (including additions) is subject to meeting required parking on site, or off site if the property is within a Parking Assessment District. The right to develop building space in excess of an FAR of 0.50 up to an FAR of 1.0 shall require a Finding by the City that the proposed new development and parking can be accommodated consistent with the Niles Design Guidelines and without significant disruption to surrounding properties. The Zoning ordinance will need to be modified in order to implement these provisions of the plan.

### Reformulation of Parking District

*LU-10: The Niles Parking Assessment District should be reformulated to accommodate additional parking*

In order to facilitate the economic revitalization, the existing parking district needs to be reformulated. The district currently encompasses properties in the downtown area along Niles Boulevard, generally easterly of G Street. Currently, 176 parking spaces are provided in two lots on the north (hill) side of Niles Boulevard. The district will need to provide a mechanism by which property owners can contribute toward the parking needed to support additions allowed by the proposed 1.0 FAR, new users can join the district and future development on the UP property can be accommodated. The district must also address long-term maintenance.





*Niles Canyon Historic Railway*

## TRANSPORTATION/CIRCULATION CONCEPT

The transportation and circulation concept diagram (Figure 8) illustrates the overall framework for access, circulation and parking in the Niles district. It includes rail lines, parking, pedestrian and bicycle access and vehicular routes.

### **Pedestrian Rail Crossing and Train Stop**

*Policy T-1: Establish a safe crossing of the active Union Pacific rail line so that passengers may access the historic rail line from downtown Niles and passengers arriving from Sunol may visit Niles.*

The historic Niles Canyon Railway currently operates an excursion train from Sunol to Niles, but passengers cannot access the train from downtown Niles nor can passengers off board when coming from Sunol due to the absence of a safe crossing of

the active Union Pacific rail line that lies between downtown Niles and the Niles Canyon Railway tracks.

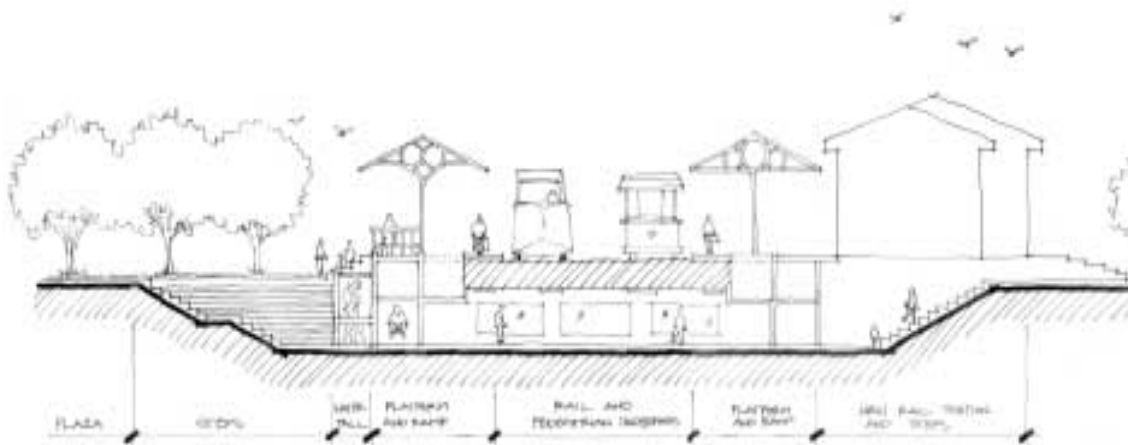
Once a safe crossing has been achieved, a train stop with appropriate platforms should be developed in downtown Niles near the proposed plaza to accommodate passengers.

In addition, special events and weekend service on the Amtrak Capitol Corridor passenger line could be supported by a new rail stop in Niles and provide a new transportation option for those visiting Niles.

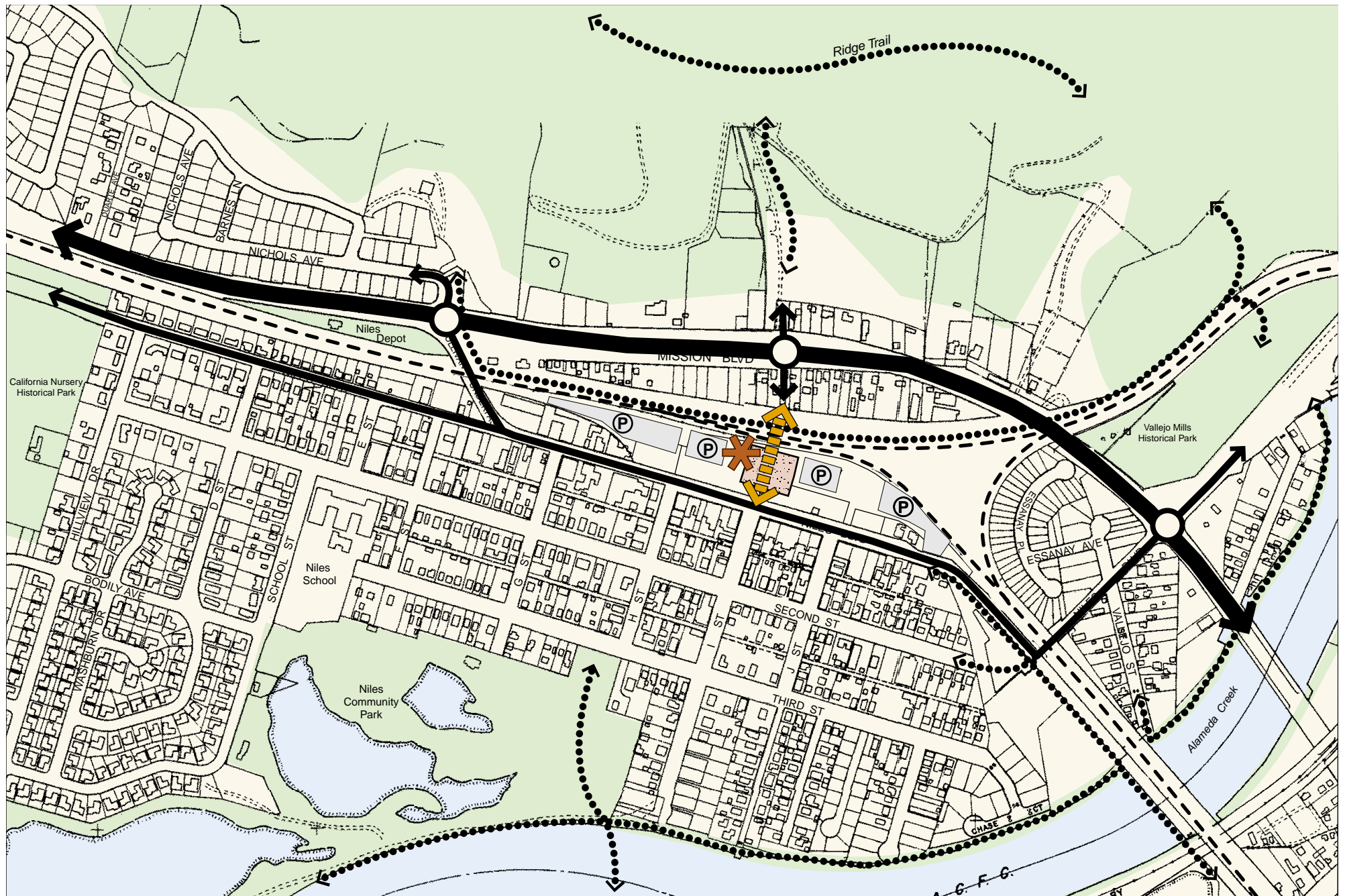
### **Parking**










*Policy T-2: Provide parking behind (or below grade) new development along Niles and Mission Boulevards.*

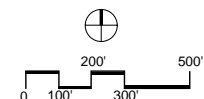
A new rail station and new infill development in downtown Niles would increase demand for parking. Some historic rail passengers will opt to begin their trip at the Niles station while others will arrive from Sunol via the train. Parking for rail passengers, shoppers and other visitors should be located behind or below grade of new shops and stores along Niles and Mission Boulevards. Locating parking behind development contributes to an attractive and pedestrian accessible streetfront by screening vehicles from view and by minimizing walking distances from the sidewalk to building entrances. Locating parking to the sides of shops also allows for screening of unsightly parking, and contributes to a safe pedestrian environment in the plaza and the Niles Boulevard retail area.



*Potential Railroad Underpass*



- |  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
|  Plaza              |  Pedestrian Railroad Crossing |  Main Vehicular Routes       |
|  Niles Depot        |  Trails                       |  Intersection Improvements   |
|  Parks & Open Space |  Railroad                     |  Parking (Public or Private) |



**Figure 8**  
**TRANSPORTATION CONCEPT**

**NILES CONCEPT PLAN**  
CITY OF FREMONT  
PLANNING DIVISION

*Policy T-3: Work with property owners and business owners to identify potential for shared parking and explore opportunities for enlarging the existing Parking District.*

With a mix of land uses in Niles, there is potential for sharing parking spaces among retailers, restaurants, railroad passengers, office workers and residential uses. For example, shops open during the day can share parking with restaurants serving the dinner crowd.

Parking policies may also be used to reinforce a mixed-use site development concept. As the Niles district improves with additional infill uses, local merchants, property owners and the City of Fremont should explore opportunities to enlarge the existing parking district and take advantage of shared parking.

*Policy T-4: Ensure that new parking areas are well designed.*

Ensure that new parking areas are landscaped, irrigated and well lighted, and that they provide access to primary pedestrian linkages in the surrounding retail district.

*Policy T-5: Ensure that additional parking is provided commensurate with the demand to ensure that impacts to the surrounding residential neighborhood are minimized.*

As the Niles district grows in the future, it will become important to include a larger area in the parking district to ensure a unified approach to parking in Niles, and to minimize impacts to the surrounding residential neighborhoods.

### **Mission Boulevard (State Route 238)**

*Policy T-6: Create an attractive Boulevard.*

Improve the appearance of Mission Boulevard with ample boulevard landscaping from the Sullivan Underpass to the Alameda Creek Bridge.

*Policy T-7: Work with Caltrans and other agencies/organizations to investigate intersection improvement options along Mission Boulevard.*

To accommodate future growth and new development along Mission Boulevard, the City should work with Caltrans to identify intersection improvement options along Mission Boulevard (e.g., at the Sullivan/Mission Intersection), as warranted by ongoing traffic studies.

In the long term, as new development occurs along Mission Boulevard in accordance with the land use concept of this plan, it may also become necessary to improve access from Mission Boulevard to these new developments at the Mayhews Road intersection.

*Policy T-8: Work with Caltrans to implement Mission Boulevard widening project.*

To accommodate future growth and increased traffic, volumes, the City should work with Caltrans and other regulatory agencies to implement the planned Mission Boulevard widening project.





*Bicycle trail at Niles Community Park*

### **Niles Boulevard**

*Policy T-9: Consider the implementation of additional traffic calming measures on Niles Boulevard and neighborhood streets.*

Use of traffic calming techniques, such as raised intersections and crosswalks, would create an identifiable “slow zone” for vehicular traffic. Slightly elevated crosswalks at selected intersections along a long street should have a specialized pavement treatment that would alert drivers of a pedestrian zone. Other traffic calming measures should be considered on neighborhood streets, especially near the elementary school.

This technique could improve pedestrian safety, discourage cut-through traffic and link the north and south sides of Niles Boulevard, thereby enhancing the pedestrian atmosphere of the District. Raised intersections could be placed at both ends of Niles Boulevard (to mark the entry to this “slow zone”) and at I Street, in front of the new plaza.

### **Pedestrian and Bicycle Connections**

*Policy T-9: Provide a pedestrian/bicycle crossing from downtown Niles across Mission Boulevard to hillside open space areas.*

Work with Caltrans and other agencies/organizations to provide a safe pedestrian/bicycle crossing of Mission Boulevard.

*Policy T-10: Provide pedestrian and bicycle connections from Niles to and across Alameda Creek.*

Improve pedestrian and bicycle connections to Alameda Creek from Niles Boulevard by way of a new sidewalk and bike lane along Niles Boulevard to the Alameda Creek.

Second Street, paralleling Niles Boulevard, could be enhanced with the addition of bicycle lanes. This street runs in front of the Niles Elementary School, and could provide a safer connection to Alameda Creek if obstructions at the eastern end of Second Street are removed when the area is redeveloped.

*Policy T-11: Improve bicycle and pedestrian connections to the surrounding Fremont community.*

A new pedestrian/bicycle crossing should be created across Alameda Creek to connect the Niles area to central Fremont, improved connections can be made to the Quarry Lakes Regional Recreation Area and other East Bay Regional Parks District lands as well as the Bay Area Ridge Trail.

## COMMUNITY DESIGN CONCEPT

The Community design concepts discussed below are intended to enhance the appearance of the Niles' streets, buildings and open spaces. These concepts strive to create high quality private and public places and spaces. The community design concept for Niles, illustrated in Figure 9, reinforces and builds upon the unique historic character of the Niles district.

### Historic Character

*Policy CD-1: Preserve and enhance the historic character of Niles District through a variety of mechanisms including the adoption of Design Guidelines, historic preservation incentives and improved community awareness.*

The historic character of the Niles commercial district should be maintained through preservation of older historic buildings and careful integration of new development. Completion of the pending Design Guidelines for the Community Commercial District should be a priority. Continuation of the Redevelopment Agency's Seismic Retrofit and Commercial Rehabilitation programs in conjunction with the adoption of other historic preservation incentives will provide ongoing support for preservation of historic resources. Retail development should occur within the context of this unique historic character.

### Downtown Plaza

*Policy CD-2: Develop a downtown plaza at the heart of Niles for community events and informal gathering*

Develop a new plaza in the vicinity of the existing flagpole (Niles Boulevard at I Street) to provide a gathering place for residents and special events. The plaza would preserve open space on the northern side of Niles Boulevard, maintain views of the surrounding hills, and provide a connection between north and south sides of Niles Boulevard.

The plan for the plaza should be contemporary but also compatible with the historic landmark elements of Niles. It should provide benches, and other public amenities to create a comfortable place for formal and informal gathering. Major pedestrian and bicycle connections should be created, linking the plaza to the rail station, the future commercial district along Mission Boulevard and the Vallejo Mills Historic Park (See Parks and Open Space Concepts).

New retail development anchored by pedestrian-oriented retail uses such as cafes and restaurants should be encouraged. These uses should be located on the eastern and western ends of the plaza to enhance activity in the plaza and maximize the benefits of this public place.



*Streetscape*





*View of hillside open space from Niles*



*Sign marking the Niles district*

*Policy CD-3: Locate the train station for the Niles Canyon Historic Railway adjacent to, or within, the plaza.*

The historic 1901 train depot should be considered for relocation into or adjacent to the new plaza for this purpose. If the 1901 Niles Depot is not relocated, a new station, of compatible design, should be constructed to serve the area.

*Policy CD-4: Consider constructing a public marketplace pavilion at the downtown plaza.*

A covered “open-air” marketplace structure should be considered in or adjacent to the plaza for performances, community events, and potential farmers’ market. The structure should be a contemporary design perhaps utilizing a simple open metal structure modeled after the old railroad sheds.

### **Views of Hills**

*Policy CD-5: Maintain views of the hillsides from Niles by establishing view corridors across the proposed plaza and extensions of the lettered side streets.*

Views of the hillsides should be maintained from the plaza area and from proposed view corridors along the lettered side streets (G, H, I and J Streets). New buildings along Niles Boulevard should be limited in height to no more than two stories above existing grade.

### **Alleyways**

*Policy CD-6: Encourage and foster community efforts to improve the functionality, appearance and safety of the alleyways.*

Encourage the property owners along Iron Horse alley to improve and maintain access, paving and lighting for these alleyways. The alleyways should provide access for commercial deliveries, municipal services (waste and recycling pick-up), and allow for rear entries to businesses and residential units.

### **Signage**

*Policy CD-7: Implement the adopted signage program to improve way-finding and access to Niles and maintain the character of the district.*

This Concept Plan supports the full implementation of the signage program recently completed for Niles. The historic neon entry signs should be used at the Niles Boulevard and Sullivan/Mission Boulevard Intersections to improve the entryways into Niles. The proposed kiosk/directory sign should be located in the downtown plaza.

*Policy CD-8: Signage design should be consistent with and contribute to the character of Niles.*

Signs should be designed in keeping with the character of Niles and the adopted sign guidelines. Use of materials, colors and lighting on signs can provide an attractive detail to enliven the appearance of the street.

## Landscaping

*Policy CD-9: Provide attractive landscaping along Mission Boulevard and the lettered side streets off of Niles Boulevard.*

Mission Boulevard, particularly between the Sullivan undercrossing and Alameda Creek, should have landscaped medians and street trees. New development, additions and alterations should include landscaping improvements consistent with this concept.

The lettered side streets between Niles Boulevard and Second Street could also accommodate additional tree plantings to enhance the pedestrian experience. Planting locations, however, need to be sensitive to building signage and preservation of view corridors.

*Policy CD-10: Street trees should be provided in all new residential developments.*

A canopy of street trees contributes to the character of the street, reduce water evaporation, add shade, improve the air quality and add value to neighborhoods for very little cost.

## Entryway Landscaping

*Policy CD-11: Create entryway landscaping features along Mission Boulevard and Niles Boulevard that visually highlight the Niles District.*

Incorporating entryway landscape features should be considered along Mission Boulevard at Nursery Avenue, the Sullivan undercrossing, at Niles Canyon/Niles Boulevard and at the south end of the Alameda Creek bridge abutment along Mission Boulevard. Niles Boulevard, between Mission Boulevard and the railroad, should be enhanced with entryway landscaping such as large-scale trees such as Canary Island Palms and colorful plantings. Also see policy LU-7 (Niles Gateway).

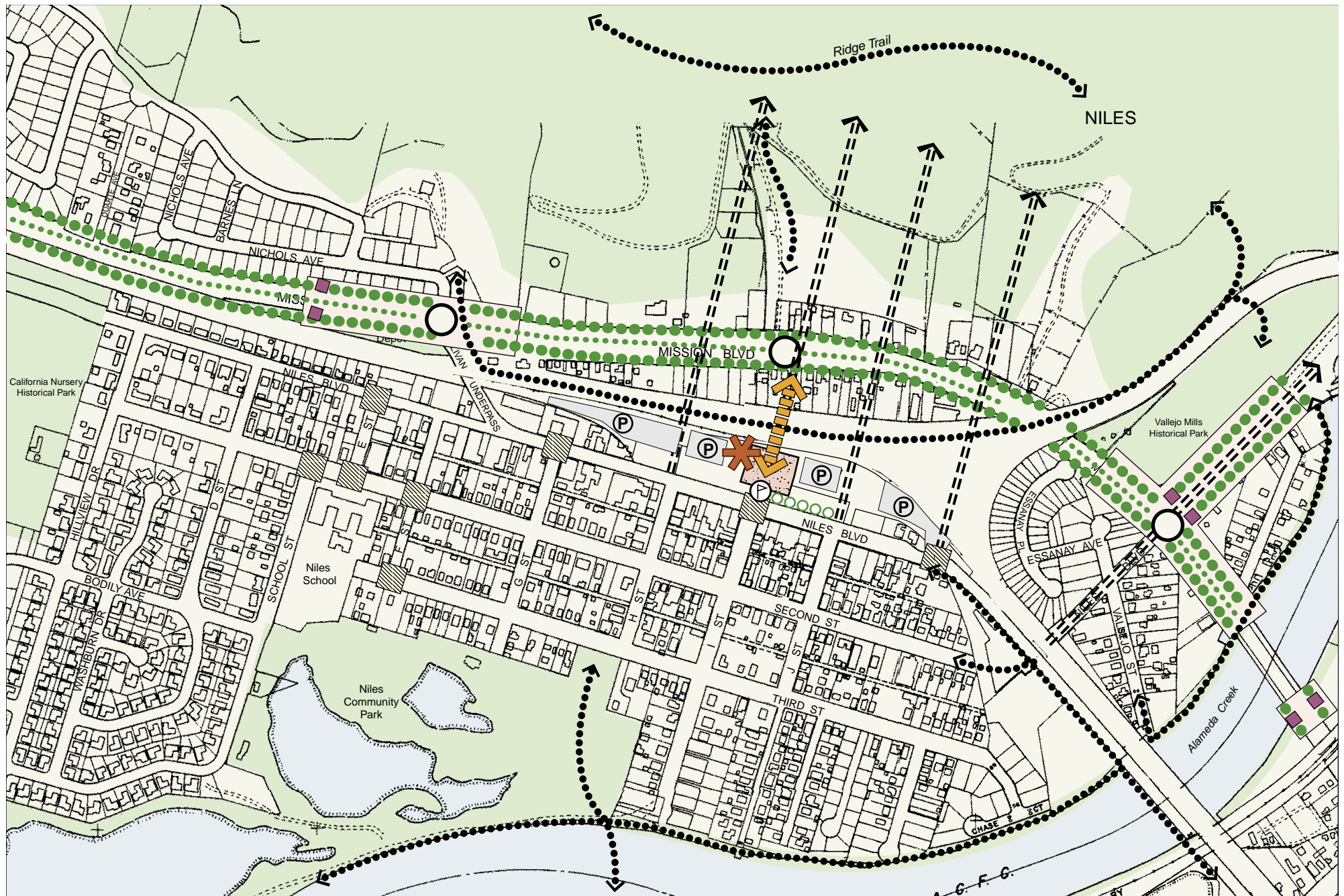
## Development on the UP Property

*Policy CD-12: New development along Niles Boulevard on the UP property should respect the scale and character of existing development. In particular, the historic rhythm of development established by the original 25-wide lotting pattern should strongly influence the design vernacular of new buildings.*

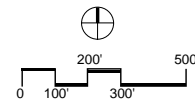
Niles' original 25-foot wide lotting pattern resulted in buildings that were 25, 50 and in a few instances 75 feet wide. While new buildings are not required to be exactly 25, 50 or 75 feet wide, they should respect this rhythm to maintain the pedestrian scale of the town and to avoid homogenous or monotonous designs that are uncharacteristic of Niles. Parking should be located behind buildings to maintain the pedestrian experience along Niles Boulevard.



*Canopy of street trees on residential streets*



- |                                 |                              |                |                         |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------|-------------------------|
| (P) Parking (Public or Private) | Pedestrian Railroad Crossing | Plaza          | Landmark Sycamore Trees |
| Parks & Open Space              | Trails                       | Niles Depot    | Flagpole Memorial       |
| Traffic Calming                 | Entryway Landscaping         | Entry Features |                         |
| Intersection Improvements       | Boulevard Landscaping        | View Corridors |                         |



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800 Hearst Avenue  
Berkeley, CA 94710  
510.845.7549

**Figure 9**  
**COMMUNITY DESIGN AND**  
**PARKS & OPEN SPACE CONCEPT**  
**NILES CONCEPT PLAN**  
CITY OF FREMONT  
PLANNING DIVISION



## PARKS & OPEN SPACE CONCEPT

The Niles vicinity is fortunate to possess a wealth of parks and open space resources, including hillside open space, Niles Community Park, Vallejo Mills Historic Park, California Nursery Historic Park, the Alameda Creek corridor and Quarry Lakes Regional Recreation Area. As illustrated in Figure 9, the parks and open space concept identifies improved connections to these nearby resources, some of which are currently difficult to access directly from Niles.

### Trail Linkages

*Policy P-1: Improve linkages between local pedestrian and bicycle trails and open spaces.*

Improve the ability of pedestrians and bicyclists travel from Niles to nearby parks and open spaces by creating crossings of the railroad tracks, Mission Boulevard, and Alameda Creek. Provide a variety of trail loops in Niles.

### Alameda Creek Trail

*Policy P-2: Improve and extend the existing trail along Alameda Creek.*

The Alameda Creek corridor could be improved with additional landscaping, pedestrian furniture, scenic overlooks and directional signage. The trail should also be extended to connect with planned improvements at the Quarry Lakes Regional Recreation Area.

A new sidewalk should be constructed along the southern portion of Niles Boulevard to connect with the Alameda Creek Trail.

A pedestrian/bicycle connection to Second Street should also be pursued in the future when development or redevelopment is proposed at the southern end of Niles Boulevard and/or Second Street.

### Niles Canyon Linkages

*Policy P-3: Improve connections to East Bay Regional Park destinations (e.g., picnic areas and trailhead) within Niles Canyon.*

Access to many of the East Bay Regional Park areas is limited due to the lack of vehicular access and parking availability. The Niles Canyon Railway provides an opportunity to link residents and visitors to regional parks and recreational opportunities within Niles Canyon.

*Policy P-4: Create pedestrian trail links from Niles to the East Bay Regional Parks District lands and the Bay Area Ridge Trail.*

The Fremont hills and the East Bay Regional Parks District resources such as the Vargas Plateau Regional Park and the Bay Area Ridge Trail are great regional assets in close proximity to Niles. Pedestrian trail connections would provide a more direct access to this regional open space system for Fremont and Bay Area residents through Niles



Alameda Creek

A well-defined program for implementation is essential to bringing the Niles Concept Plan to fruition. The following is an overall strategy for implementing the highest priority actions. These strategies and priority actions have proven to be the key ingredients to successful plans in the past. However, they require commitment from the public and private sectors as well as continuing involvement of the community in guiding the future of Niles.

### *Build on what we have*

There are a number of existing natural and community resources, facilities, and programs that make Niles a unique place. It is important to continue to support these assets as new initiatives are implemented.

### *Encourage public-private-community partnerships and communication*

Development decisions require communication and coordination with all interested and affected parties. In addition, funding for certain projects will require participation from both the public and private sectors. Efforts should be taken to foster the relationships between the City, community groups and organizations and individual property and business owners before, during, and after a project is implemented. This type of front-end communication and follow up are key to developing trust and building coalitions that translate to continuing support into the future.

### *Learn from other experiences*

Throughout the planning process, community members cited both positive and negative examples of projects and programs from other cities and communities. Niles can learn from these successes and failures what it takes to succeed and what pitfalls to avoid in project implementation. Staff and business leaders should regularly visit other communities to gain valuable information on how innovative projects are being successfully implemented and how they are contributing to their community.

## **Implementation Strategies**

### *Identify the lead responsibility for each action*

Each action should have an organization that is primarily responsible for implementation. This will establish clear responsibilities and accountability.

### *Develop a realistic timeframe*

Not all of the great ideas contained in the Implementation Matrix can (or should) happen overnight. The Implementation Matrix and Priority Actions list were intended to offer a guide for staging proposed initiatives. The timeframes offered in the Implementation Matrix are intended to be sufficient to show significant progress towards implementation for each action. However, some action needs to be taken quickly to demonstrate public and private commitment to the Niles community.

## Evaluation of Performance

Regular, periodic performance measurement is an effective tool for objectively assessing how well an organization is achieving its mission and goals and performance reviews provide increased accountability. In addition, regular reviews will help to identify barriers and to determine if "mid-course corrections" are needed.

Performance evaluation is critical for continued progress towards the community's vision. It will create a formal framework to evaluate successes and obstacles and to strategically amend the Niles Concept Plan to reallocate resources where they will be most effective. This annual review and reallocation process should occur in conjunction with the City's annual budget process.

## Priority Actions

The following actions comprise the first phase for implementation of the Niles Concept Plan. As previously discussed, resource constraints make it impossible to implement all of the action strategies outlined in this plan right away. Thus, it is important to start with the projects most likely to have the greatest impact on the Niles district and those with the highest leverage potential. Projects were assigned short, medium, or long-term timeframes, ranging from less than one year, one to three years, and more than three years, respectively.

## *Criteria*

The following criteria were developed and used to evaluate and prioritize the implementation actions.

### 1. Project Cost and Funding Availability

A key component of implementation is the ability to pay for the necessary improvements. Projects with high value-added impacts and with either low-costs or available funding mechanisms were given high priority because they are more easily implemented than costly projects for which new funding sources need to be identified.

### 2. Ease of Implementation

Projects that would provide a number of "quick wins" were also given high priority. "Quick wins" are, in effect, short-term projects that keep the process moving forward and gain momentum for revitalization.

### 3. Catalytic Effect

Projects that have the potential to have broad ranging positive impacts on the overall quality of downtown Niles were given priority because of their catalytic effect. These projects can be seen as a necessary precursor to initiate future improvements elsewhere with little additional involvement, funding or encouragement.



**4. Visibility**

Projects that create a visible improvement to the area were given priority because they send a positive message to the entire community.

**5. Community Support**

Since a strong community consensus around a project can often facilitate implementation, projects with significant community support received priority.

**6. Concentration**

Projects that offered improvements in a concentrated area, creating a critical mass of uses for success that also fit into and complemented the larger plan for Niles were also given a high priority.

**7. Viability**

The project should survive and flourish into the future. Projects need to be based firmly on economic realities, taking into account market conditions and competition from neighboring communities and the region.

The following ten priority actions were identified through the planning process as key “first steps” toward accomplishing the vision for Niles. These priority actions can realistically be implemented one to three years, and could help to attract desirable new development and visitors to Niles. These actions are not presented in any priority order. The actions are all part of the first phase of the implementation process and are intended to be initiated simultaneously.

**1. Town Center Revitalization – Initiate the redevelopment of the Town Center Site including additional retail uses, a new plaza, improved and expanded parking, and a railroad station.**

The vacant Union Pacific railroad site in the center of Niles on Niles Boulevard is a key opportunity site to achieve the Niles Vision. The City of Fremont is in the process of acquiring the approximately five-acre site. The City of Fremont should initiate the redevelopment process with a private developer for the site.

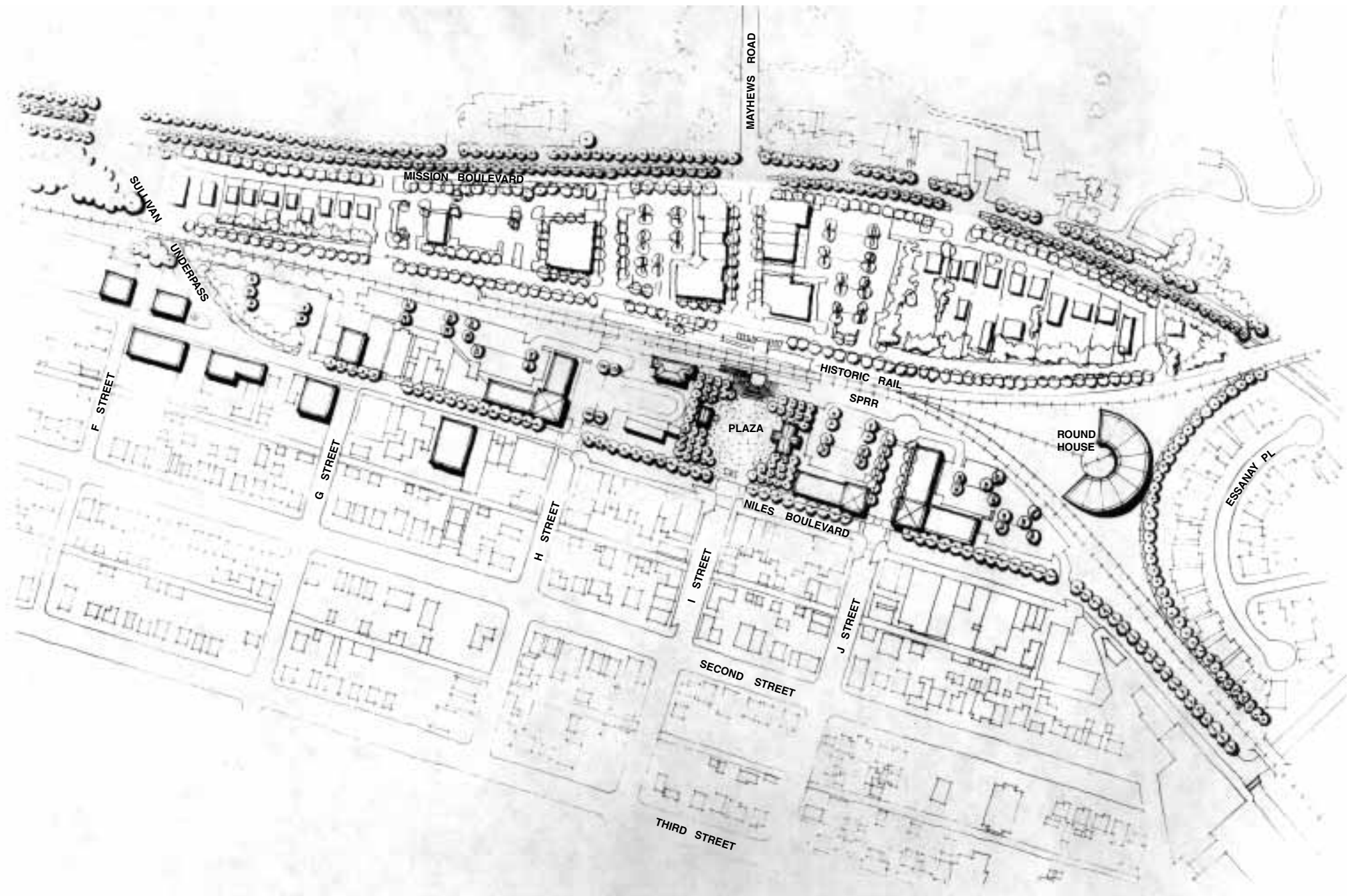
The Concept Plan identifies the site for creation of a plaza, additional parking for off-site uses, mixed-use development, and a railroad depot. Restaurant and retail uses should be located around and opening on to the new plaza. Parking should be located to the rear of the site away from Niles Boulevard. New buildings should be designed in keeping with the character and scale of Niles with ground floor retail uses and upper floors devoted to office or residential uses. The illustrative diagrams provided in the concept plan show options or alternatives for development of the town center and should not be construed as the final plans.

*Phasing of Development*

The Town Center site can be developed in phases or as one project in response to market demand. The early phases anticipate a smaller commercial component (approximately 10,000 square feet) in conjunction with new and revised parking layout, the plaza, and possibly a Niles Canyon Railway station. The railroad station could be provided in this phase of the project if an “at grade” railroad crossing is granted by the State of California, Public Utilities Commission (PUC). The City of Fremont would develop the plaza or work with a private developer to incorporate the plaza as part of new development on the UP property.

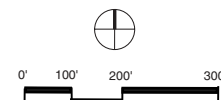
Later phases would include additional retail uses and an improved railroad station.

The ultimate phase would include a strong pedestrian connection across or under the railroad lines to the north providing pedestrian access not only to the railroad museum and interpretive center but also to future commercial/office development along Mission Boulevard.

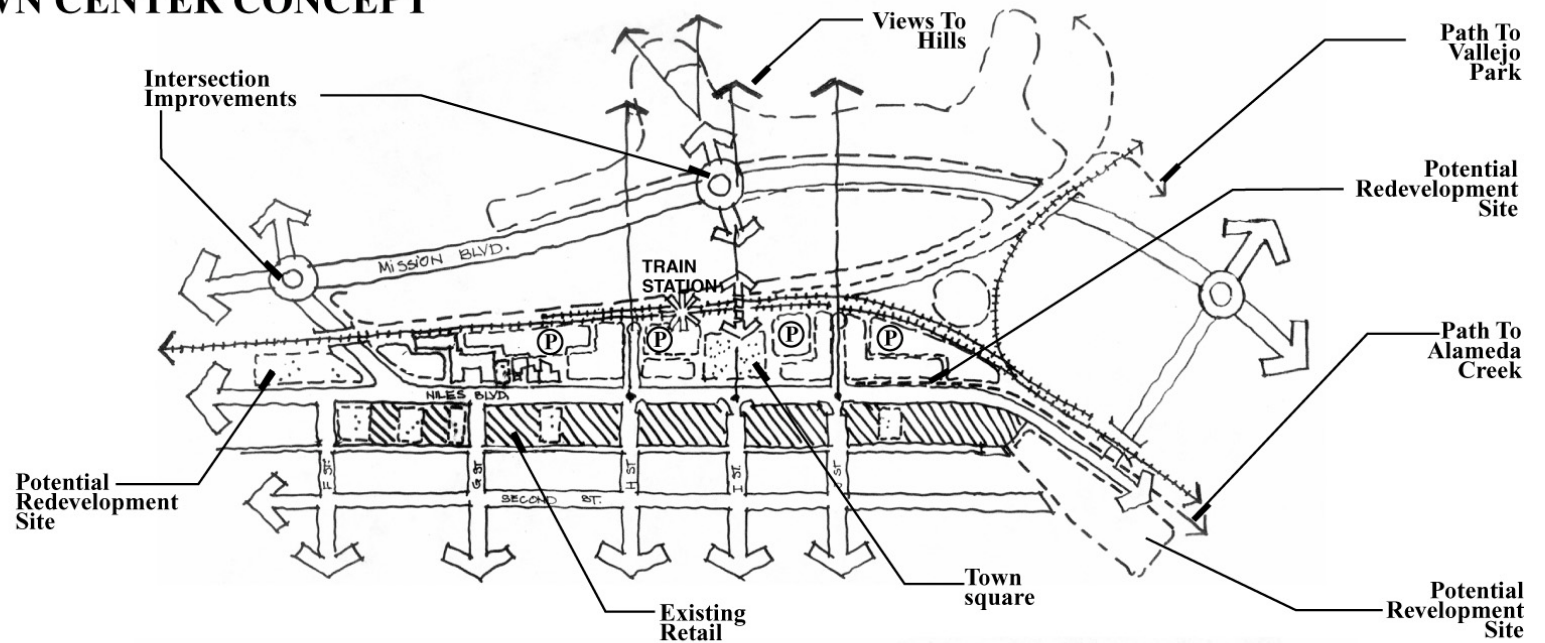


**Figure 10**  
**TOWN CENTER ILLUSTRATIVE PLAN**

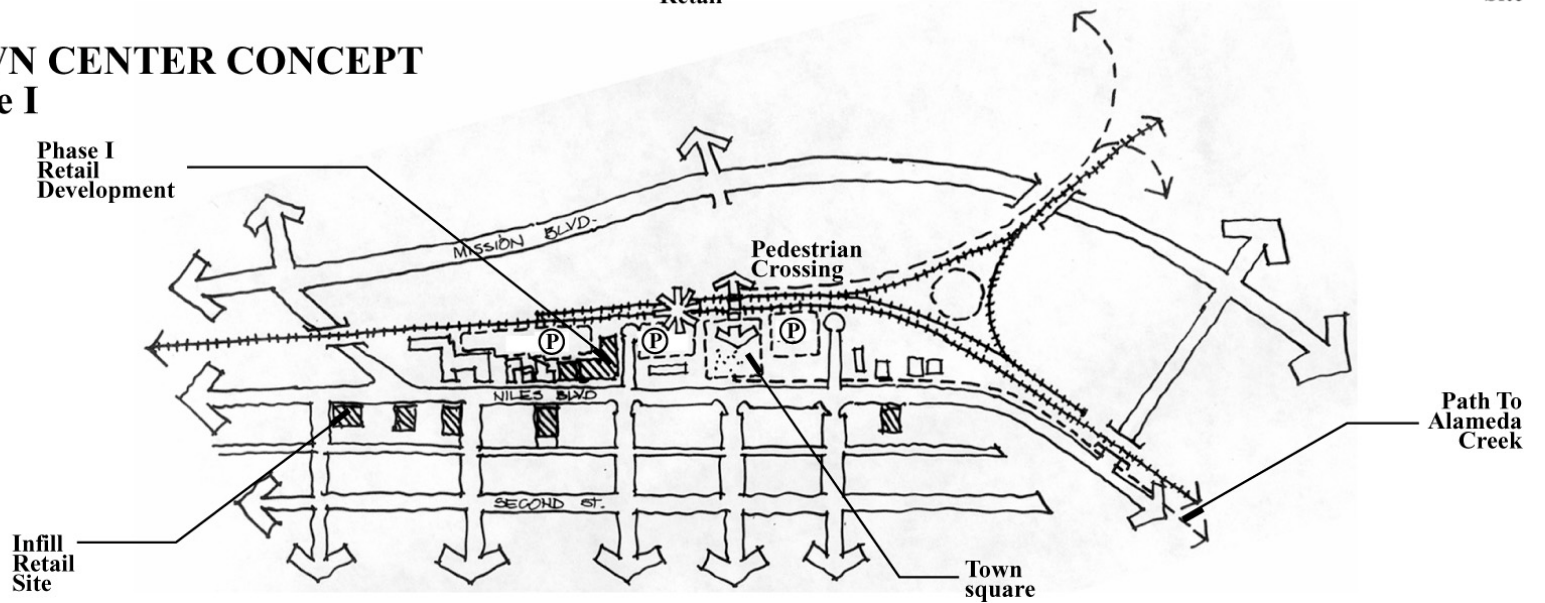
**NILES CONCEPT PLAN**  
 CITY OF FREMONT  
 PLANNING DIVISION



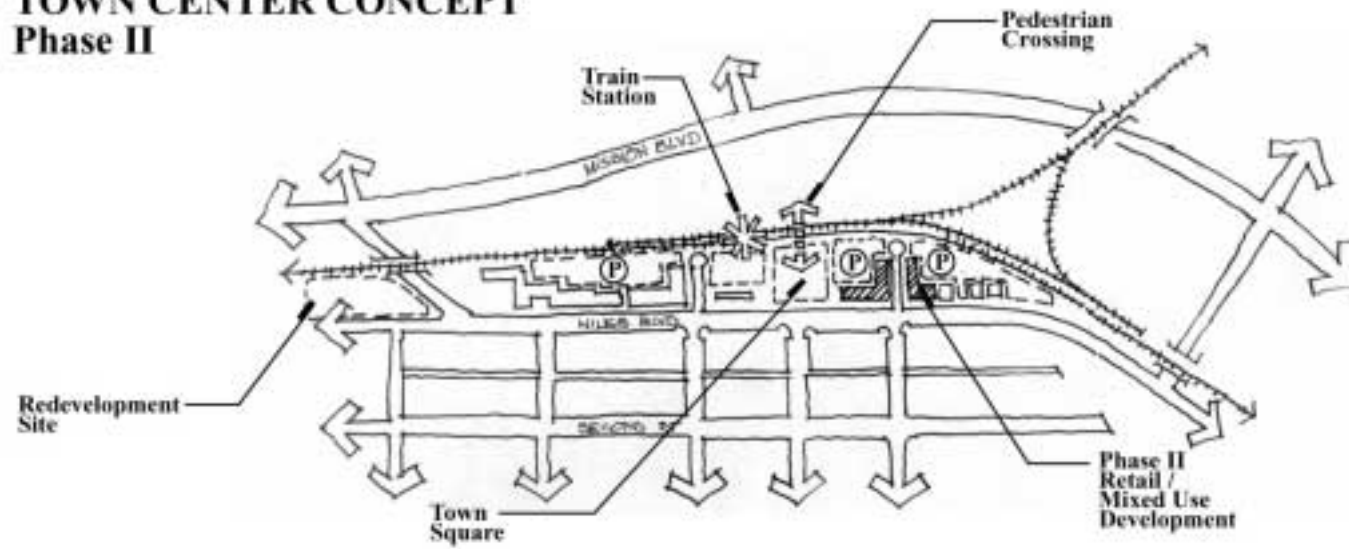
## TOWN CENTER CONCEPT



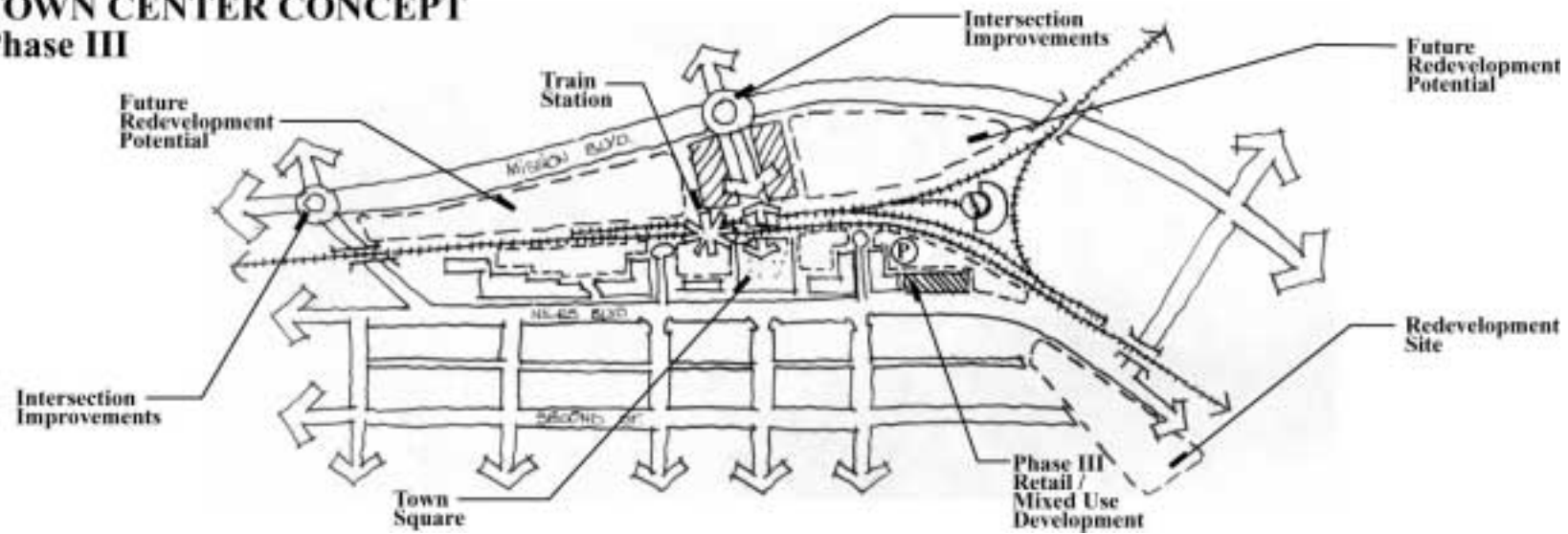
## TOWN CENTER CONCEPT Phase I



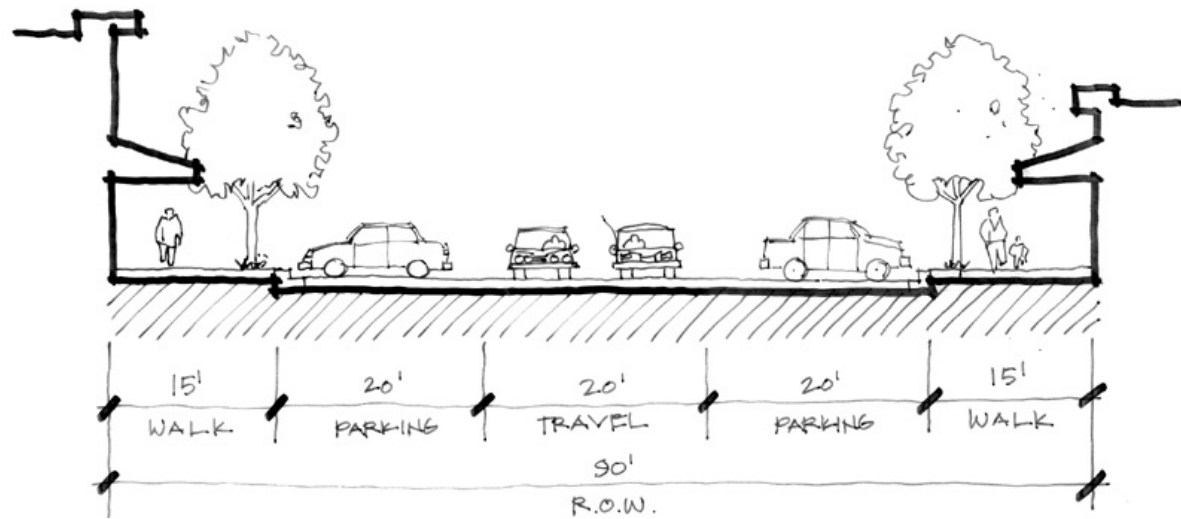
## TOWN CENTER CONCEPT Phase II



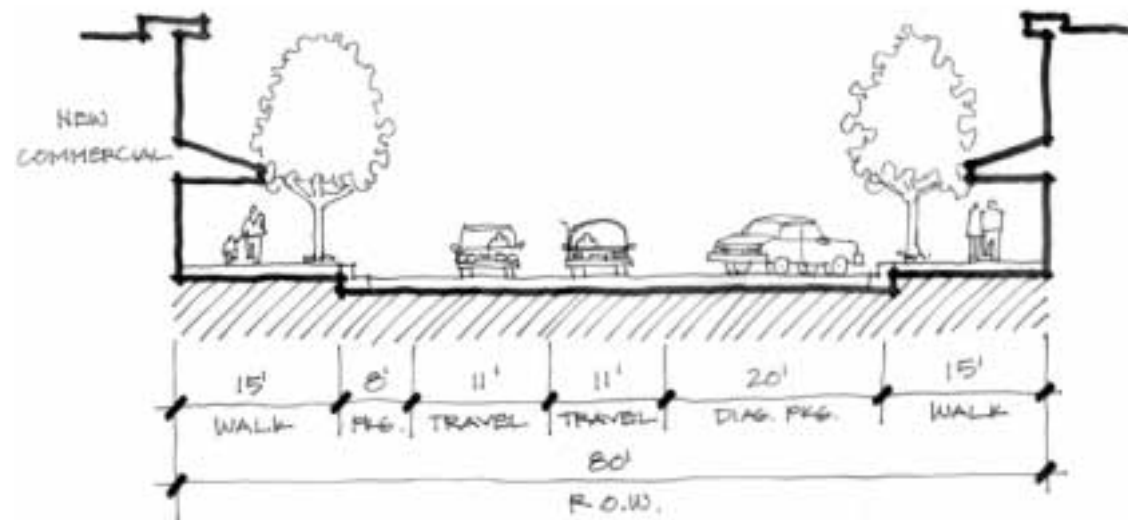
## TOWN CENTER CONCEPT Phase III







*Street Section for Extension of H and J Streets at the Town Center*



*Alternative Street Section for Extension of H and J Streets at the Town Center*





*A covered market could host farmers' markets and other special events.*



*The plaza could be a park-like setting*

## **2. Downtown plaza – Build a plaza in the City property between H and J Streets.**

A plaza at the heart of Niles celebrates the district's rich history and diversity. A major implementation action of the Concept Plan is to develop a detailed master plan (and construction drawings) and complete construction of the plaza. Ideally this would be incorporated with other redevelopment efforts on the property.

The plaza would be a place for community celebrations, special events, and for informal gatherings. The design of the plaza should reflect the texture and character of Niles. Located next to the rail, the plaza should reflect the area's strong railroad ties. The construction of this public space would have the added benefit of retaining the "one-sided railroad town" character of Niles.

The City of Fremont is in the process of acquiring the property from the Union Pacific railroad. The parcel is roughly five acres; however, the plaza would most likely cover only a portion of the site. Additional parking and infill uses could also be accommodated on the site.

The exact size and location of the plaza requires further study, but the plaza should be designed to incorporate the following elements:

**Open plaza** – Create an open landscaped plaza for public gatherings and meetings and recreation.

**Flagpole** – Restore the flagpole as a memorial at its original location at the intersection of sightlines of I

Street and Niles Boulevard. The flagpole needs to be restored and maintained as a first step towards revitalizing the open space next to the train tracks.

**Depot** – Explore opportunities for relocation of the historic Niles Depot into or adjacent the plaza or build a new depot.

**Covered Market** – Build a structure to house a covered market during promotional and community events.

**Railroad Car** – Retain and incorporate the old railroad passenger car that currently houses the Niles Merchants' Association.

**Freight House** – Retain and incorporate the existing 1870's freight house located along Niles Boulevard between H and I Streets. Its building footprint is roughly 1,700 square feet. The structural integrity of the building will need to be examined for safety, however, if renovated; it could complement the depot and further contribute to the character of the plaza. Appropriate uses that complement the historic rail and/or the civic, cultural, and entertainment uses in Niles could be planned for this space.

**Kiosk** – Incorporate an information kiosk to orient visitors to Niles history, landmarks and businesses.

**Public Restroom Facilities** – Retain the existing restroom facility for public use.

**Children's Activity Area** – Incorporate a children's activity area at the town plaza. This area could incorporate opportunities to educate youth about the region's history.

### 3. Develop Passenger Service for Niles

Currently, Niles does not have railroad passenger service. Trains of the Pacific Locomotive Association's (PLA) Niles Canyon Railway (NCRy) operate from Sunol to Niles and return, but they do not board passengers in Niles. Amtrak's Capitol Corridor passes through Niles but trains do not stop. The PLA hopes to develop its western terminus in Niles, however, a pedestrian crossing of the former S.P. track (active U.P. line) is needed before passengers can be boarded. A Niles Canyon Railway terminal will complement the character of the town and will attract visitors.

The Capitol Corridor has expressed an interest in stopping its trains in Niles to connect with the NCRy and in so doing also serve Niles. A relocated Niles depot could serve both railroads.

If the NCRy terminal can be developed, parking will be needed to serve its passengers. Initially, the existing parking lots along Niles Boulevard may be sufficient. However, if as expected, the popularity of the trains increases and other economic development takes place, an estimated 200 to 300 parking spaces will be needed to serve the railroad.

The location of the parking is dependent upon a number of factors including the total number of spaces required, the railroad crossing, and the future development of a plaza and proximity to businesses. During non-event weekends, Niles may already have the capacity to accommodate this extra traffic with its existing parking lots. However, if existing parking spaces accommodate future development of a plaza,

additional parking must be provided. Initially, it is desirable to locate this parking on the Niles side of the tracks, encouraging visitors to stay in Niles for shopping or dining after their train rides, or while waiting for the next train. Eventually, some parking could be provided across the train tracks off of Mission Boulevard.

In addition to stopping for a connection with the excursion trains of the NCRy, the Amtrak Capitol Corridor trains could also stop to serve many special events held in Niles. If sufficient patronage could be demonstrated, Niles could become a regular stop for all Capitol Corridor trains passing through Niles.

### 4. Railroad Crossing – Work with the California Public Utilities Commission (PUC) to develop a workable railroad crossing, preferably at-grade, to serve the new railroad passenger station and provide pedestrian access to Niles Boulevard from Mission Boulevard.

The Niles Canyon Railway currently does not board passengers in Niles because there is no legal crossing of the existing Union Pacific (U.P.) main line into Niles Boulevard. Trespassing on railroad property except at a public crossing is a misdemeanor. The U.P. track runs between the NCRy and downtown Niles. For passengers to get to or from the NCRy trains in downtown Niles a safe public pedestrian connection of the U.P. tracks must be secured.

A pedestrian at-grade crossing would require PUC approval. The at-grade crossing is most consistent



*Historic Niles Depot*



*Historic train car maintained by the Niles Merchants'*

with the historic atmosphere of the Niles Canyon Railway, and would likely be less costly than constructing a pedestrian bridge or underpass. However, the crossing would have to be controlled by gates and fencing to ensure the safety of passengers.

If an at-grade crossing cannot be secured, a pedestrian underpass could be used to allow crossing of the railroad tracks. The underpass should run under both the NCRy and Union Pacific tracks, allowing pedestrian passage from Mission to Niles Boulevard. The underpass should be designed to be open, wide and with ample lighting to be a safe, accessible and attractive feature.

### **5. Explore options for relocating the Niles Depot to the Niles Town Center site.**

Relocating the Niles Depot downtown would be a significant addition to the historic attractions along Niles Boulevard. Originally located in downtown Niles (built in 1901), this historic landmark was moved to its current location on Mission Boulevard to preserve it from demolition in 1982. The depot was restored in 1988 and currently houses a museum run by the Niles Depot Historical Foundation. The Depot's main floor has approximately 1,450 square feet of space, while the basement, added when the depot was relocated and renovated in the 1980's is approximately 1850 square feet. Current basement tenants, including the Tri-City Society of Model Engineers, would be displaced if the structure was moved and could be accommodated at another appropriate location in Niles. The Niles Depot would

add to the character of the downtown and attract visitors to the area. To reflect the rich history of Niles as a railroad town, the depot and the surrounding landscaping should be carefully designed with attention paid to historical accuracy when appropriate.

The City is acquiring the property where the Depot was originally located, along Niles Boulevard across H and J Streets. The precise site for the possible relocation of the Niles Depot would be determined as part of the preparation of a master plan for the plaza.

If the Depot were to be relocated from the existing Niles Depot Historical Park it would leave the park without its primary historic feature. In addition, the existing foundation would have to be removed or possibly reused for a new building. Upon widening of Mission Boulevard the Niles Depot Historical Park will lose some historical context. Recognizing that the site will undergo significant changes, its future as a historical park or even a park is in question. Alternative uses may be considered for the site such as a rest stop/orientation point/entryway area for Niles. Prior to moving the depot, a plan for the use and development of the Niles Depot Historical Park (including a funding source) will be developed, reviewed by the Recreation Commission, and approved by the City Council.

**6. Improve Retail Diversity and Mix – Implement a retail strategy to recruit new commercial uses to increase the diversity of the retail mix.**

Through coordinated business organization efforts, create a more diverse retail mix to complement the existing uses in the downtown area and better serve both Niles residents visitors. For example, a quality restaurant has the ability to serve local residents and to attract people from around the Bay Area.

**Local Serving Businesses** – Bookstores, bakeries, gardening stores and other local serving businesses are encouraged to locate in Niles. Local serving businesses could also add to the nighttime activity within the district.

**Restaurants and cafes** – Restaurants and cafes would generate more evening activity, attract more people, and support other uses such as shopping, offices, and the historic rail and museum.

**High-tech and professional offices** – New offices would attract new business to the Niles area, and provide new opportunities to property owners by filling-in currently underutilized spaces. Niles should take advantage of its proximity to the booming Silicon Valley by providing smaller spaces and professional offices in fields such as high-tech research and development, computer software, web design, law offices, and architecture. These smaller offices may range from 2,000 to 10,000 square feet, with up to 15 employees, and would likely be located upstairs from ground floor retail on Niles Boulevard or along side streets. Additionally, larger office spaces could be developed on Mission Boulevard.

Supporting retail services, such as cafes and business services should also be encouraged.

**Antiques** – Niles is recognized and respected as an antique district throughout the region and the state. The existing mix of antiques and collectibles contribute to the retail diversity and character of the street. Businesses specializing in antique furniture and other household goods would complement the existing uses.

**Galleries and Studios** – Niles has a long history of craftsmanship and the arts, dating back to the first railroad days, tile works and the Essanay Studios. In keeping with this tradition, Niles should develop opportunities for artists and craftsmen, such as furniture-builders, glass blowers, potters, and tile-makers.

**7. Continue funding of commercial area improvements – A mechanism should be identified to generate funding for improvements to the Niles District.**

The City of Fremont should work closely with Niles property owners and community organizations to identify the best solutions and to provide assistance where necessary (such as special assessment districts, special grant applications, business improvement districts, etc.). The funding generated could be used for area improvements such as additional streetscape improvements, community activities, and events, security improvements, advertising and promotional materials, etc.). Property owners should be involved in the funding assessments and the appropriation of funds.



*Local-serving businesses, such as bakeries, would be encouraged to locate in Niles*





*Alleyways can be attractive public spaces*

## **8. Reformulate the Niles Parking Assessment District to accommodate future needs.**

The City of Fremont should work closely with Niles property and business owners to reformulate the Niles Parking Assessment District to accommodate future parking needs and promote economic revitalization. The new district will need to provide a mechanism by which property owners can contribute towards the parking needed to support additions allowed by the proposed 1.0 FAR, new users that wish to join the district and future development on the UP property. The district must also address long-term maintenance needs.

## **9. Develop plans and improvements for the alleyways in Niles.**

There has been a long-standing issue as to who owns the alleyways and who is responsible for maintenance and development of the right-of-way. In the past, the alleyways' condition has made it difficult for waste collection agencies to operate their trucks. Many of the alleyways are unpaved or in poor condition. Personal safety is also an issue at night. At the same time, the alleyways present an opportunity for extension of the commercial district and providing improved access to adjacent in-law units and upper floor residential units. Development of the alleys must be sensitive to the needs and desires of adjacent residents and property owners. Residents and property owners should collaborate with the City to create an alleyway improvement. The plan should include a new City specification or standard that addresses the uniqueness of these alleys.

## **10. Continue and strengthen existing City programs for façade improvements and earthquake retrofitting for businesses in the commercial area.**

The design and appearance of the storefronts along Niles Boulevard are critically important to the maintenance of a vibrant, pedestrian-friendly environment. The façade improvements should enhance and complement the historic character of the district. The City of Fremont is in the process of developing a set of Design Guidelines for the historic Niles retail area.

The City of Fremont already has in place a program for façade improvements and earthquake retrofitting of unreinforced buildings. These programs should be continued. Working together, local business organizations should encourage local property owners to take advantage of the City's programs for improving the appearance and safety of existing buildings.

## IMPLEMENTATION ACTION MATRIX

The matrix of the following pages documents the range of actions developed by the community and refined through public workshops and meetings. The process involved identifying issues, brainstorming solutions, exploring institutional, policy and funding strategies, and then prioritizing and scheduling these actions.

Each of the actions generated in the course of the planning process articulates a piece of the community's vision for Niles. The matrix represents a range of potential actions that could be carried out over time and if funding is available. All of the actions in the matrix are not intended to be carried out immediately. It is anticipated that once the top actions are complete, the community would revisit the actions outlined here to assess the community's progress, redefine or reconfirm the vision, and select the next top actions for implementation.

Some of the actions identified in the implementation matrix are already underway. The Concept Plan recognizes the efforts of the programs and supports their ongoing application. The implementation matrix organizes the actions into the eight categories identified in the Strategic Framework section:

- A. Diverse Retail Mix
- B. Rail
- C. Historic Character
- D. Community Design
- E. Transportation and Circulation
- F. Marketing and Communication

G. Community Resources

H. Land Use Regulations

### Time Frames:

The following time frames are identified in the matrix:

**Short** – Generally less than one year to implement.

**Medium** – Between one to three years to implement.

**Long** – Over three years to implement

**Ongoing** – The action or program should be pursued on an ongoing basis.

### Potential Funding Sources:

Given the limitation on community resources and funding, the Concept Plan recommends that the top priority actions be initiated first. Funding for the actions and improvements called for in this plan could come from a variety of sources including:

- City of Fremont Redevelopment Agency
- City of Fremont general funds
- Private funds
- Grants and donations
- Volunteer assistance
- Fees & fares
- Transportation funds  
(Measure B for Mission Blvd.)
- Business Association dues
- Business improvement districts



## IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

**A. DIVERSE RETAIL MIX**

*GOAL: Attract and retain a diverse and viable mix of regional and local serving retail to complement existing uses in downtown Niles.*

<b>Action</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
A1 Increase retail diversity in the Niles commercial area by attracting specialty retail stores, boutiques, etc. that serve local and regional markets.	Short-Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business Associations</li> <li>• Property owners</li> <li>• City of Fremont RDA(Redevlopment Agency) &amp; ED (Economic Development)</li> </ul>
A2 Recruit a quality local restaurant as well as restaurants that will draw clientele regionally.	Short-Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City of Fremont ED &amp; RDA</li> <li>• Property owners</li> <li>• Business Associations</li> </ul>
A3 Continue retail promotions and special events (e.g., sidewalk sales).	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business Associations</li> <li>• Property owners</li> </ul>
A4 Investigate the concept of a Business Improvement District (BID) to help fund district-wide programs (e.g., clean-up, events, promotion, marketing security).	Short-Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business Associations</li> <li>• Property owners</li> <li>• City of Fremont Finance with ED/RDA</li> </ul>
A5 Continue to encourage building seismic upgrades and property improvements (façade enhancements, etc.).	Short-Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City of Fremont RDA</li> <li>• Property owners</li> </ul>
A6 Encourage existing Fremont businesses to establish smaller, satellite stores in Niles such as a bakery, bank, etc.	Short-Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business Associations</li> <li>• Property owners</li> <li>• City of Fremont RDA &amp; ED</li> </ul>
A7 Develop a program to educate existing business and property owners to help them fill the needs/desires of Niles residents and how to market to local residents.	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business Associations</li> <li>• Property owners</li> <li>• City of Fremont RDA &amp; ED</li> </ul>
A8 Work with local property owners and developers to explore strategies to redevelop the residential properties on Mission for mixed-use commercial office uses through private investment.	Long	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City of Fremont Planning, RDA&amp;ED</li> <li>• Property Owners &amp; developers</li> </ul>

## B. RAIL

*GOAL: Re-establish a passenger railroad depot in downtown Niles and create a stop for historic rail service to draw people to the downtown.*

	<b>Action</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
B1	Promote historic rail service between Sunol and Niles.	Short-Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pacific Locomotive Association</li> </ul>
B2.1	Coordinate with Public Utilities Commission (PUC) to establish an at grade crossing to access the historic rail line	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City of Fremont Engineering</li> <li>• Pacific Locomotive Association</li> </ul>
B2.2	If an at-grade crossing is not possible construct an undercrossing of the active rail line(s).	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City of Fremont Engineering, Planning and RDA</li> </ul>
B3	Develop joint-use-parking spaces to serve the historic railway and new retail uses (see Transportation and Circulation strategy).	Medium-Long	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City of Fremont</li> <li>• Pacific Locomotive Association</li> </ul>
B4	Establish a train stop in Niles for both historic and potential Amtrak weekend/special event service.	Short-Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pacific Locomotive Association</li> </ul>
B5	Investigate the potential to relocate the 1901 Train Depot back to Niles Town center.	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City of Fremont</li> </ul>
B6	Maintain communication with sub-regional partners to learn from their experiences with historic rail.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pacific Locomotive Association</li> </ul>
B7	Allow weekday commuter rail services only if sufficient parking is available to support the service.	Medium-Long	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commuter rail providers</li> </ul>

## C. HISTORIC CHARACTER

*GOAL: Preserve and build upon the unique, historic character of Niles' residential and commercial areas by enhancing Niles' cultural and historic venues to create a unique historic entertainment center that will attract people from all over the Bay Area.*

Action	Time Frame	Responsibility
C1 Investigate incentives for historic preservation and renovation.	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>City of Fremont Planning</li> </ul>
C2 Designate historic buildings with bronze plaques.	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>HARB</li> <li>Business Associations</li> </ul>
C3 Develop guided and self-guided tours of historic destinations in Niles. Encourage property owners along Niles Blvd. to display historic photographs of the street, businesses, and buildings as part of the tour.	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Neighborhood Associations</li> <li>Business Associations</li> </ul>
C4 Review the Landmark Tree List.	Short-Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>City of Fremont Landscaping</li> <li>HARB</li> </ul>
C5 Preserve current residential character; prevent the demolition of historic homes for “mega-houses” through zoning ordinance changes.	Short-Long	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>City of Fremont Planning</li> </ul>
C6 Develop promotion materials to communicate the benefits of State and Federal historic designation to property owners and residents and clarify the boundaries of historic district.	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>City of Fremont Planning</li> <li>HARB</li> </ul>
C7 Apply for national and state “historic district” status.	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>City of Fremont - HARB</li> </ul>
C8 Encourage historic railroad organizations or other interested parties to develop a historic railroad museum in downtown Niles.	Long	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pacific Locomotive Association</li> <li>Business Associations</li> </ul>
C9 Work with the Essanay Preservation Committee to identify opportunity site for the development of Essanay Studios and an “old-time” movie house and a working multi-media studio and film museum.	Long	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Essanay Preservation Assoc.</li> <li>Business Associations</li> </ul>

## D. COMMUNITY DESIGN

*GOALS: Create a central gathering place to provide an urban focus and sense of place for the community.*

*Improve the character of Mission Boulevard between Alameda Creek and the Sullivan Underpass to create a sense of arrival and create an entryway for the downtown.*

Action	Time Frame	Responsibility
D1 Adopt Design Guidelines to guide future development in Niles	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>City of Fremont Planning</li> </ul>
D2 Implement the directional signage program in and around Niles.	Short-Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>City of Fremont Engineering/RDA</li> </ul>
D3 Build a plaza that is characteristically Niles on the land surrounding the flagpole for community events and informal gathering. The design for the plaza and surrounding spaces should include the flagpole, depot/train stop, freight house, train car(s), an information kiosk, public restroom facilities, a performing arts space (e.g., bandstand), a covered outdoor area to host a weekly farmer's market and special events and a children's activity area.	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>City of Fremont</li> </ul>
D4 Recreate historic landscaping and garden surrounding the train depot, if relocated.	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pacific Locomotive Association</li> <li>Community &amp; Business Organizations</li> </ul>
D5 Develop landscaping and streetscape improvements along Mission from Sullivan Underpass to Niles Boulevard to encourage a connection to downtown Niles.	Medium-Long	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>City of Fremont Engineering/Landscaping</li> <li>Caltrans</li> </ul>
D6 Develop alleyway improvement and maintenance plan that provides an improved roadway surface and lighting.	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Property Owners</li> <li>City of Fremont Engineering</li> </ul>
D7 Create an arts & crafts center.	Long	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community Organizations</li> </ul>
D8 Develop a performing arts center.	Long	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community Organizations</li> </ul>

## E. TRANSPORTATION & CIRCULATION

*GOAL: Improve vehicular, transit, bicycle and pedestrian connections to surrounding areas and the region to improve both the quality of life as well as the economic vitality of the downtown area.*

Action	Time Frame	Responsibility
E1 Investigate the potential for establishing a conditional stop [Amtrak] at Niles for special events and weekends.	Short-Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pacific Locomotive Assoc.</li> <li>• City of Fremont</li> </ul>
E2 Improve pedestrian and bicycle connections to nearby parks and open spaces (e.g., Vallejo Mills Park, Quarry Lakes, Ridgeline trail, and Downtown Fremont).	Short-Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City of Fremont</li> </ul>
E3 Prepare comprehensive parking plan to address near-term and long-term parking needs (commercial, commuter, recreational, residential) through the reformulation of the parking assessment district.	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City of Fremont Planning &amp; RDA</li> </ul>
E3.1 Evaluate and implement new parking standards for commercial areas in the downtown Niles area. Consideration should be given to a 1:500 parking standard (National Standard for historic districts).	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City of Fremont Planning &amp; RDA</li> </ul>
E4 Improve access and egress from Mission Boulevard with signage and intersection improvements.	Short-Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City of Fremont Engineering/RDA</li> </ul>
E5 Secure a pedestrian and bicycle bridge across Mission Boulevard to provide a safe and convenient crossing.	Medium-Long	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City of Fremont</li> <li>• Caltrans</li> </ul>
E6 Investigate the potential for a traffic signal on Mission at Sullivan intersection to improve access onto Mission from the east and west.	Medium-Long	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City of Fremont Engineering</li> <li>• Caltrans</li> </ul>
E7 Improve regional bus connections to/from Niles.	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transportation providers</li> </ul>
E8 Create transit connections to the Union City BART station.	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transportation providers</li> </ul>
E8 Coordinate with bus tours and hotel shuttles to provide service to Niles.	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City of Fremont ED</li> <li>• Business Associations</li> </ul>
E9 Develop traffic calming measures on Niles Blvd. and on neighborhood streets (especially near the school) to discourage cut-through traffic and speeding.	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City of Fremont Engineering</li> </ul>



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## F. MARKETING & COMMUNICATION

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*GOAL: Develop an ongoing communication strategy to market Niles and its vision.*

	<b>Action</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
F1	Continue current regional advertising and marketing of special events as well as Niles' historic character.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business Associations</li> <li>• City of Fremont ED &amp; RDA</li> </ul>
F2	Package the Concept Plan for use as a marketing tool. Make the plan accessible through the City and Business Association web sites.	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City of Fremont RDA &amp; ED</li> <li>• Business Associations</li> </ul>
F3	Create a local display in Niles to increase visibility of ongoing projects to educate others.	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business Associations</li> </ul>
F4	Work with Fremont's Boards, Commissions and other organizations to coordinate improvements and actions.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business &amp; Community Organizations</li> <li>• Property owners</li> </ul>

## G. COMMUNITY RESOURCES

*GOAL: Ensure Niles is a safe, comfortable place by increasing the diversity of nighttime businesses and working with community members, the police department and community support services.*

Action	Time Frame	Responsibility
G1 Explore options for expanding Niles Elementary as a community resource.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community &amp; Fremont Unified School District</li> </ul>
G2 Continue to hold regular community events and meeting in the school.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community &amp; Fremont Unified School District</li> </ul>
G3 Encourage extended library hours for the Niles Library.	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Homeowners</li> <li>Library</li> </ul>
G4 Work with local bar owners to improve public safety.	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Police Department &amp; business associations with bar owners</li> </ul>
G5 Increase community policing/police presence in Niles (e.g., police officers on bikes).	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>City of Fremont Police Department</li> <li>Business Associations</li> </ul>
G6 Encourage new nighttime businesses (e.g., restaurants) in Niles.	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Business Associations</li> <li>City of Fremont ED &amp; Planning</li> </ul>
G7 Continue strong code enforcement to insure property improvements meet local standards and design guidelines.	Short-Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>City of Fremont Community Preservation</li> </ul>
G8 Tone down the lighting intensity along Niles Blvd.	Short-Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>City of Fremont Engineering</li> </ul>
G9 Improve lighting in parking lots.	Medium-Long	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>City of Fremont with businesses and property owners</li> </ul>
G10 Improve lighting in alleys.	Long	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Property owners</li> </ul>
G11 Work with resource agencies to offer community support services to local at-risk persons and families.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Social service agencies</li> </ul>
G12 Develop a multi-use community center and utilize it for local performing arts, exhibits and public meeting venues.	Long	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>City of Fremont with business and community organizations</li> </ul>

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## H. LAND USE REGULATIONS

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*GOAL: Update land use regulations to enable implementation of the Niles Concept Plan.*

	<b>Action</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
H1	Revise the General Plan and zoning ordinance (including FAR allowances) to conform to the Niles Concept Plan.	Short-Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>City of Fremont Planning and Redevelopment</li> </ul>
H2	Identify sites for potential new mixed-use (office, retail and housing) development, including Mission Blvd., Niles Blvd., and side streets.	Short-Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>City of Fremont Planning</li> </ul>
H3	Encourage amenities and entertainment uses that support tourism such as bed and breakfast lodging, restaurants, events, museum, train stop, the Quarry Lakes project, performing arts, movies, etc.	Short-Long	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>City of Fremont Planning/ED</li> <li>Business Associations</li> </ul>
H4	Encourage live-work spaces where appropriately zoned.	Medium-Long	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>City of Fremont Planning</li> </ul>
H5	Allow mixed-use development along alleyways.	Medium-Long	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>City of Fremont Planning</li> </ul>

## **APPENDIX: FREQUENTLY USED TERMS**

ACTA	Alameda County Transportation Agency	TEA-21	Transportation Efficiency Act for the 21 <sup>st</sup> Century
BID	Business Improvement District		
Big Daddy's	Former restaurant located at the southeastern corner of Mission Boulevard and Niles Canyon Road	UP Property	That portion of the Union Pacific Property being acquired by the City of Fremont Redevelopment Agency.
County Property	That property acquired by Alameda County generally bounded by the Ford Tract, Union Pacific railroad, Sullivan Underpass and Essanay Place.	Wye	The triangular area formed by the Niles Canyon Railway lines and the Union Pacific tracks.
EBRPD	East Bay Regional Park District		
ED	Economic Development (City of Fremont)		
FAR	Floor Area Ratio. A measure of building intensity determined by the ratio of gross floor area to net lot area.		
Ford Tract	That grouping of properties located between Mission Boulevard and railroad right-of-way.		
HARB	Historic Architecture Review Board		
NCRy	Niles Canyon Railway		
PLA	Pacific Locomotive Association		
PUC	Public Utilities Commission		
RDA	Redevelopment Agency (City of Fremont)		